

ABDALLAH

OR

THE FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK

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ABDALLAH
OR THE FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK

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OR
THE FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK

BY
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ABDALLAH

I

THE JOY OF THE HOUSE



T Djiddah the rich, on the shores of the Red Sea, there once lived an Egyptian merchant, by the name of Hadji Mansour. It was said that he had formerly been a slave of the great Ali Bey, and had served by turns, and sometimes even at the same time, the French and the Turks, the Mamelukes and Mehemet Ali, in the wars of Egypt. During the struggle each party relied on him for provisions, arms, and camels; yet after the battle he always complained of having ruined himself for the victor. It is true that at that time no one showed more zeal,

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and no one obtained more cheaply the spoils of the vanquished. In this honest vocation the obliging Mansour had gained great wealth, though not without some anxieties. He had been denounced by the envious as a spy, he had been bastinadoed by fanatics as a traitor, twice even he would have been hanged had it not been for the charity of a pacha, who had consented, for the trifling sum of a million piastres, to acknowledge such shining innocence. Mansour had too lofty a soul to be dismayed by these political risks; and if he retired, when peace was made, to Djiddah, it was only because lawful commerce was thenceforth the only road that led to fortune.

In this new kind of life Mansour was neither less prudent nor less successful. It was a common report that his house was paved with gold and precious stones. Little love was bestowed on the Egyptian, who was a stranger in Arabia, and who passed for one of the harshest of creditors; but at Djiddah men dared not openly show contempt for a man who measured gold by the bushel, and as soon as Mansour appeared in the bazaar, all ran to vie for the honor of holding his stirrup and kissing his hand. The merchant received all this homage with the modesty of a man who knows the prerogatives of wealth: thirty years of avarice and cunning had brought all honest men to his feet.

One thing alone was lacking to this favorite of fortune and disturbed his happiness: he had no children. When he passed before the shop of a poor tradesman,

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and saw the father surrounded by young sons, the hope and pride of the house, he sighed with regret and envy, and on his return he shut himself up in his warehouse, forgot his pipe, and instead of telling his beads or reciting the verses of the Koran, slowly stroked his white beard, reflecting with terror in his heart that old age was approaching and that he should leave none of his flesh and blood behind him to carry on the business after he was gone. His only heir was the pacha, who might grow tired of waiting, in which case what would hinder him from despatching a solitary foreigner and laying violent hands on these dearly bought treasures?

These thoughts and fears poisoned the life of the Egyptian. What was his joy, therefore, when one of his wives, an Abyssinian woman, announced to him that he would soon be a father! At this news the good man well-nigh lost his reason. Twice as avaricious and covetous since he had begun to amass treasures for his child, he shut himself up to weigh and count his gold, unfolded his rich stuffs, and dug up his diamonds, pearls, and rubies; then talked to these lifeless things as if they could understand him, and told them of the new master who would watch over and love them in turn. When he went into the city he insisted on talking to all he met of his son, for it was a son that God owed his faithful servant, and was greatly astonished to see every one attending to his business as usual, when all the inhabitants of Djiddah should have had but one thought,—namely, that

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God, in his justice, was about to bless the house of the shrewd and fortunate Mansour.

The Egyptian was not disappointed in his expectations; and, that nothing might be wanting to his happiness, a son was born to him at the most favorable hour of the most auspicious month of the year. When, on the eighth day, he was permitted to see his long-wished-for child, he tremblingly approached the palm-tree cradle, lined with cotton, where the heir of the Mansours was sleeping on a silken handkerchief embroidered with gold, and gently raising the veil that covered it, perceived a robust infant, almost as black as his mother, already gathering the cotton about him with his tiny hands. At this sight Mansour stood dumb with admiration; large tears trickled down his cheeks; then, controlling his feelings with an effort, he took the babe in his arms, and, approaching his lips to its ear, "God is great," he murmured; "there is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." More tranquil after this prayer, he gazed lovingly at his son. "Oh, gift of God," cried he, "thou art but a week old, but, to see thy strength and grace, one would take thee for a year at least. Thy face shines like the full moon! Say," said he, turning to the mother, "what have you named him?"

"If God had afflicted me with a daughter," answered the Ethiopian, "I should have chosen a name for her; but since I have had the glory of bringing a man-child into the world, to you belongs that honor.

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Beware, however, of too ambitious a name, which might arouse the jealousy of the evil eye."

Mansour was reflecting, when suddenly he heard a noise in the street. A Persian dervish was driving before him an ass laden with provisions, while a crowd of children was following the heretic, and showering him with abuse and blows. The dervish pressed forward like a man who neither feared nor sought martyrdom, stopping now and then to rail at his enemies. "Accursed be thou, O Omar!"¹ cried he, striking the ass, "and accursed be all who resemble thee!" "Behold a new proof of my happiness!" cried Mansour. "My child shall be called Omar; such a name will ward off the evil eye, and preserve him from all witchcraft."

As he was replacing the babe in the cradle, a Bedouin woman entered the room with an infant in her arms. She was tall and well formed; her face was unveiled, as is the custom in the desert; and her mien was so graceful and dignified that, poorly clad as she was, she might have been taken for a sultana.

"Welcome, Halima," said Mansour. "I have not forgotten that Yusuf, your husband, fell in my service while defending my last caravan. The moment has come to prove that I am not ungrateful. You know what I expect of you. If I can not make my son a sherif or give him the green turban, I can at least cause him to be brought up like the son of a sherif,

¹ Homar, or Omar, in Arabic, signifies an ass.

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under a tent, among the noble Beni Amurs. Admitted into your family, and nurtured with your son, my beloved Omar will learn a purer speech than mine, and will find friends among your kindred who will protect him in after years. On my side, I shall fittingly recognize and reward your devotion. Let the friendship of our children begin from this day; from this day let them sleep in the same cradle. Tomorrow you shall carry them away, that they may grow up together in your tribe. Omar shall be your son as Abdallah shall be mine; may Fortune smile on both!"

"May God be their refuge against Satan, the accursed!" answered Halima, bowing her head. "We are in God's hands; to him we must return."

Mansour looked at her, smiling. He was a free-thinker and had little faith in God, although his name was constantly on his lips. He had lived too long, and mixed too much with men, to believe that God meddles much with the affairs of this world; on the other hand, he had a strong belief in the Devil, of whom he stood in great fear. The only action in his whole life for which he reproached himself was that of having thrown seven stones at the great Devil of Jamrat at the time of his pilgrimage to Mecca, and he still feared the rancor of Satan, whom he had stoned. Doubtless he was proud of having cheaply earned the noble title of hadji,¹ which rendered him worthy of respect in the eyes of his customers; it

¹ Hadji, or saint, is the name given to those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

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was with the purest devotion that he spoke of the Caaba,¹ that gem of Paradise placed in the holy city of Mecca by Father Abraham, but at heart he was not easy respecting the consequences of his imprudence, and would even have surrendered the name of hadji to have been sure of the Devil's forgiveness for his rashness.

¹The holy house, or principal temple of Mecca.





II

THE HOROSCOPE



THE same evening, just as the moon was rising, the wise Mansour entered the room where the two children were sleeping peacefully in each other's arms, followed by a ragged dervish, with a dirty, uncombed beard, bearing a strong resemblance to the reviled heretic of the morning. He was one of those shameless beggars who seek the fortunes of others in the stars without ever finding their own therein, and who, always pursued and hooted at, and always employed, will last as long as the malice of Satan, or the avarice and credulity of men. Halima was unwilling to leave the children with this suspicious personage, but Mansour commanded it, and she was forced to obey. Scarcely had she quitted the room when the Egyptian led the dervish to the cradle, and ordered him to draw his son's horoscope.

After attentively gazing at the child, the astrologer mounted the housetop and observed the stars; then, taking a coal, he traced a large circle, divided into

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several compartments, in which he placed the planets, and at length declared that the heavens were not inauspicious. If Mars and Venus were indifferent, Mercury, on the contrary, appeared under a better aspect. This was all he could tell for the two sequins that Mansour had given him.

The merchant led the diviner back to the chamber, and showing him two large doubloons, "Is there no means," said he, "of knowing more? Have the stars already revealed all their secrets?"

"Art is infinite," answered the dervish, pouncing on the gold; "I can also tell you under the influence of what sign the child is destined to live."

Drawing from his girdle a cabalistic tablet and a bronze pen, the astrologer wrote the names of the child and the mother, placing the letters in a line; he then calculated the numerical value of the letters, and looking at Mansour with sparkling eyes, "Happy father!" he said, "your son is born under the sign of the Balance; if he lives, he may expect everything from fortune."

"What, if he lives!" cried Mansour. "What is it that you read on that accursed tablet? Does any danger threaten my son?"

"Yes," replied the dervish, "a danger which I can not define. His best friend will be his worst enemy."

"Ha! what was I about to do?" said the Egyptian. "Perchance this Bedouin child, whom I have placed in my son's cradle, will one day be his murderer! If I thought so, I would strangle him on the spot."

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"Beware of it," returned the diviner. "If your son's life is bound up with that of this child, you will only kill them both at one blow. There is no proof that this Bedouin, destined to dwell among the tents, will one day be the best friend of the richest merchant of Djiddah. Besides, what refuge is there against destiny? Can you change what is traced by the pen of the angels? What is written is written."

"Doubtless," said the merchant; "but God—His name be exalted!—has said, in the Book of Books, 'Cast not yourselves down with your own hands into perdition.'"

"The day of death," returned the dervish, gravely, "is one of the five mysteries, the key of which God holds in His own hands. Do you remember the story of the man who was with Solomon one day when Azrael passed by the king in a visible shape? Frightened by the look cast on him by the terrible stranger, he asked who he was; and upon Solomon's acquainting him that it was the angel of death, 'He seems to want me,' said he; 'wherefore order the wind to carry me hence to India.' Which being accordingly done, the angel said to Solomon, 'I looked so earnestly at this man out of wonder, because I was commanded to take his soul in India, and found him with thee in Palestine.'"

"'No man can flee from death. Do as he will,
Falls soon or late the arm e'er raised to strike;
The sage is he who looks it in the face,
Nor fears nor braves the doom decreed by fate.'"

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With these words the astrologer bowed to take leave of Mansour, who clutched his robe.

"Have you anything more to ask me?" said the dervish, looking attentively at the Egyptian.

"Yes," replied the merchant; "but I dare not give utterance to my thoughts. Yet you seem to me a friend, and you will pardon a father's weakness, where his son's interest is concerned. A wise man like you, who reads the stars, must have carried your curiosity to great lengths. It is said that there are men who, by dint of science, have discovered the great name of God—that name which has been revealed only to the apostles and the Prophet (his name be blessed!); that name which suffices to raise the dead and kill the living; that name which causes the world to tremble, and compels the infernal powers and Eblis¹ himself to obey it like a slave. Do you perchance know one of these learned men, and do you think that he would refuse to oblige a man who had not the reputation of being ungrateful?"

"You are prudence itself," returned the astrologer, in a low voice, approaching Mansour; "you may be trusted; yet words are naught but wind, and the fairest promises like dreams that take flight with the morning."

For his sole reply Mansour thrust his right arm into the dervish's long sleeve, and placed one finger in his hand.

"A purse!"² exclaimed the astrologer, in a disdain-

¹ One of the names of Satan among the Arabs.

² A purse is about \$25.00.

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ful tone; "it is the price of a camel. What madman would evoke Satan at the risk of his own life for such a trifle?"

The Egyptian stretched out a second finger, looking at the dervish, whose face wore an air of indifference; then, after a moment's silence, he heaved a deep sigh and placed a third finger in the dervish's hand.

"Three purses," said the astrologer; "it is the cost of an infidel slave. The soul of a Mussulman can not be bought at such a price. Let us part, Mansour, and forget the imprudent words you have spoken."

"Do not abandon me!" cried the merchant, grasping the dervish's arm with his whole hand. "Five purses are a large sum, and all that I can give. If necessary, I add to it the offer of my soul; our common peril will answer to you for my discretion."

"Give me the five purses, then," returned the magician, "and my friendship shall do the rest. I own my weakness; I have been unable to see you without being drawn to you: may this yielding not cost me too dear!"

Mansour brought the money. The dervish weighed it several times, and placed it in his girdle with the tranquillity of a resolute heart; then, taking the lamp, he walked three times round the cradle, murmuring strange words, waving the light before the child's face, and prostrating himself again and again at the four corners of the room, followed by Mansour, who trembled with fear and anxiety.

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After all these ceremonies, which appeared endless to the merchant, the magician placed the lamp on a bench along the wall, and taking a little box from his inexhaustible girdle, poured a black powder upon the burning wick. A thick smoke instantly filled the whole room, amid which Mansour fancied that he saw the infernal figure and flaming eyes of an Afrite.¹ The dervish seized him by the arm, and both threw themselves on the carpet, their faces buried in their hands.

"Speak," said the dervish, in a breathless voice, "speak, but do not lift your head as you value your life. Make three wishes. Eblis is here, and will grant your prayer."

"I wish that my son may be rich all his life," murmured Mansour.

"So be it!" returned a strange voice, which seemed to come from the other end of the room, though Mansour had seen the apparition before him.

"I wish that my son may always have good health," continued the Egyptian, "for, without health, of what use is fortune?"

"So be it!" returned the voice.

There was a moment's silence. Mansour hesitated as to his third wish. "Shall I wish for wit?" thought he. "No, he is my son, and he will inherit his father's cunning." The dervish's prediction suddenly recurred to his memory. "Threatened by his best friend," thought he, "there is but one means of safety for

¹ One of the infernal genii.

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him; namely, to love no one, and to think of himself alone. Besides, anxiety for others spoils our own life, and those we oblige are always ungrateful. I wish that my son may love no one but himself," said he, at length.

"So be it," returned the voice, with a terrible cry, which frightened the Egyptian so much that he remained motionless till the dervish pulled the skirt of his robe and commanded him to rise. At the same moment a jet of flame shot from the lamp, and the whole room seemed in a blaze. Mansour, terrified at his own rashness, rushed to the door to assure himself that he was still alive and that nothing had changed in the house.

While the dervish was putting on his cloak and sandals like a man whom habit hardens against fear, a woman rushed to the cradle of the infants. It was Halima, who had remained near the room during the enchantment, and whose terror had been heightened by Mansour's sudden departure. Her first care was to wet her finger with her lips and pass it over the forehead of the children, repeating a formula to ward off the evil eye. The serenity of the dervish reassured her; she blamed herself for having suspected this pious personage of magic, who wore on his face the blissful tranquillity of sanctity, and, respectfully approaching him, she kissed the hem of his robe. "Holy man," said she, "my son is an orphan, and I am a poor woman; I can offer you nothing but gratitude, but—"

"Well, well," exclaimed the astrologer, "I know in

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advance what you would ask of me,—that your son should be rich, is it not? For this, what need have you of my aid? Make him a merchant, and let him steal like old Mansour; make him a pacha, and let him pillage his brethren; make him a dervish, and let him flatter and lie. All the vices lead to fortune when they are joined with the vilest of all,—avarice. This is the secret of life. Adieu.”

“This is not what I wish,” said the astonished Halima; “you do wrong to deride me in this way. My son will be an honest man like his father; and what I wish is that he may be happy here on earth.”

“Virtuous and happy!” cried the dervish, with a sardonic laugh; “and you address yourself to me! My good woman, what you want is the four-leaved shamrock, which none has seen since Adam. Let your son seek it; if he finds it, be sure that he will lack for nothing.”

“What is the four-leaved shamrock?” cried the anxious mother; but the magician had disappeared, never more to return. Man or demon, none has since beheld him. Halima, full of emotion, bent over the cradle and gazed at her son, who seemed to smile on her in his sleep. “Rest in peace,” said she, “and rely on my love. I know not what this talisman is of which the dervish speaks, but child of my soul! we will seek it together, and something tells me that you will find it. Satan is cunning and man is weak, but God rules the heart of his faithful, and does what he will.”



III

EDUCATION



IN choosing the Bedouin woman to whom to intrust Omar, Mansour had given a new proof of his usual prudence. From the first day Halima showed her nursling all a mother's affection, and tended him more carefully than her own offspring. When she was forced to leave her tent, the cherished child that she carried on her shoulder was always Et Tagir, or the little merchant, as Omar was called among the Beni Amurs. Yet what a difference was there between the two brothers! Tall, slender, supple, and agile, with his clear eyes and brilliant complexion, Abdallah would have filled any father's heart with pride; while the son of Mansour, with his swarthy skin, thick neck, and round paunch, was only an Egyptian astray in the desert. What mattered it to the Bedouin woman? Had she not nourished them both with the same milk? Who knows even whether, like a true mother, she had not a secret weakness for the child which had the most need of her love?

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As he grew, Abdallah soon showed all the nobleness of his race. On seeing him with the Egyptian, one would have said that he already felt himself the master of the tent, and was proud of exercising the rites of hospitality. Although but six months older than Omar, he made himself his brother's guardian and protector, and his greatest pleasure was to amuse, serve, and defend him. In all the games and feasts, he insisted on giving the little merchant the best place; and whenever a quarrel arose, it was always he, and he alone, that fought, adroit, strong, and hardy, like a son of the desert.

Omar willingly remained in the background, as if he already understood the advantage to be derived from an uncalculating friendship. As indolent as a dweller in cities, he seldom quitted the tent. The Bedouin ran between the legs of the mares, wrestled with the colts, and climbed the camels without making them kneel; the Egyptian, his legs crossed on a mat, passed the greater part of the day in sleeping, and felt naught but disdain for the noisy exploits which made the joy of Abdallah. When he mixed with other children, it was only to play merchant with them. The son of Mansour had singular skill in bartering a date for a citron, a citron for an orange, and an orange for a piece of coral or some other toy. At ten years of age Omar had already found that the best use of a rosary was to aid in counting. He was not, however, ungrateful; he loved his brother after his fashion. He showered innumerable caresses on Abdallah,

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who seldom returned home without bringing bananas, pomegranates, apricots, or some other fruit that had been given him by the women of the neighborhood, who were charmed with his grace and sprightliness. By dint of tenderness, Omar always secured what he wished; but he was not better pleased with the success of his cunning than was his brother in letting himself be despoiled by the one he loved. Each of us is born with his destiny clinging about his neck like a heavy collar, and hurrying him onward; a fox nurtured by a lioness will always be a fox, and a merchant's son will never make a Bedouin.

At the age of ten, thanks to Halima, Abdallah's education was finished; he knew all that a Beni Amur needed to know. The son of Yusuf could recite the genealogy of his family and tribe; he knew the pedigree, name, surname, coat, and brand of all the horses; he could read in the stars the hour of the night, and the shadows told him the time of the day. No one knew better how to make the camels kneel; no one chanted to them in a more melodious voice those sweet songs which shorten their way and make them quicken their pace, despite fatigue and heat. Already even, he handled the gun and brandished the lance and sabre as if he had been in half a score of caravans. Halima contemplated his youthful courage with tears of joy, happy to see that the child whom she had brought into the world would some day be the honor of his people and the delight of his tribe.

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Halima was a true Mussulman; she knew that wisdom, strength, and consolation are in God alone. The children were scarcely seven years old when she had already taught them to recite the five prayers and make the ablutions. In the morning, as soon as a faint light illumed the east; at noon, when the sun turned; in the afternoon, when the shadows began to lengthen; at even, when the sun set in the horizon; and, lastly, at night, when darkness covered the earth,—Omar and Abdallah stretched the carpet of prayer upon the ground, and turning toward Mecca, repeated the holy words which comprise all religion, "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is His prophet." The prayer ended, Halima loved to repeat to the children the precepts of Ayesha,—precepts which she made the rule of her life. "Sons of my soul!" she would say to them, "listen to what Ayesha, the beloved spouse of the Prophet, the peerless virgin, and the mother of the faithful, replied to a Mussulman who asked her counsel. Remember these holy maxims; they are the legacy of the Prophet himself, and the pearl of truth:—

"Acknowledge that there is but one God alone; remain steadfast in the faith; instruct yourself; bridle your tongue; repress your wrath; forbear to do evil; associate with the good; screen the faults of your neighbor; relieve the poor by your alms; and expect your reward in eternity."

The two children were thus brought up, surrounded with the same love, and a love so tender and equal

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that the two brothers never suspected that they were not of the same blood. One day, however, an old man entered the tent, armed with a tablet of wood, painted white, on which elegant characters were traced in black. The sheik enjoyed great renown in the tribe; it was said that he had formerly studied at Cairo in El Azar, that splendid mosque, the fountain of light, which is the joy of the faithful and the despair of infidels. He was so learned that he could read the Koran, and copy with a reed the ninety-nine names of God, and the Fát-háh.¹ To the great astonishment of the Bedouin, the old man, after talking in a low tone to Halima, who put a purse in his hand, turned his sole attention to the son of Mansour, caressed him with paternal tenderness, seated him by his side, put the tablet in his hands, and after teaching him how to sway the head and body to aid the memory, made him chant the whole alphabet after him. Omar took so lively an interest in his lesson that on the very first day he learned the numerical value of all the letters. The sheik embraced him anew, promising him that, if he went on in this way, he would soon be more learned than his master, and quitted the tent without even looking at Abdallah.

The poor boy's heart swelled at the sight of this lesson of his brother's, by which he would have gladly profited. He was spared a second trial. The next morning he was sent to the fields to tend his mother's sheep. He was not alone; he had been placed in the

¹The first chapter of the Koran, and the usual prayer of the Mussulmans.

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care of a maternal uncle, a one-eyed and crippled old shepherd, but a man of good counsel. Hafiz, for this was the name of Halima's brother, was a brave soldier and a pious Mussulman, who had seen much and suffered much. The companion of Yusuf, Abdallah's father, and wounded by his side, he was the last prop of an almost extinct family, and, alone and childless as he was, he loved his nephew as his own son.

It was he that had opposed the plan of making Abdallah a scholar. "Would you know more than the Prophet, whom may God protect and bless?" said he to the young Bedouin. "What would you read,—the Koran? But is it on vile rags or your own heart that its sacred words should be engraved? Strange books—what is the use? Is not everything contained in the Koran? Is it not for rash spirits who seek the truth elsewhere that it is written, 'The likeness of those who take other patrons besides God is as the likeness of the spider, which maketh herself a house; but the weakest of all houses, surely, is the house of the spider, if they knew this'? Those whose minds are swallowed up in books are like asses laden with foreign wealth, which serves only to weigh them down. Man was not born to amass the thoughts of others, but to act for himself. Go forward, my son, with an upright heart, and in the fear of the Lord. At the age of strength God will give thee wisdom and knowledge as to the son of Jacob. It is thus that he rewards the just, for himself has said it."

These words kindled Abdallah's heart. Every day,

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when the noontide heat confined them within the tent, Hafiz recited to the son of Yusuf a few verses of the holy book, and made him repeat them after him in turn. In this way, by degrees, he taught him the whole Koran, beginning, after the Fát-háh, with the short chapters On Men, The Daybreak, and The Unity of God, and ending with the long and beautiful teachings contained in the chapters On Women, The Family of Imran, and The Cow. The child was like the sands of the desert, which drink up the rain-drops without losing a single one; he never wearied of chanting this rhythmic prose, as superior to poetry as the Word of God is to that of men. Day and night he repeated these precepts, in which eloquence and wisdom are strung together like pearls in a necklace. Whenever a good Mussulman wished to give a feast to his comrades or to pay honors to the tomb of a friend, the lame shepherd and his disciple were called upon to recite the whole Koran or one of its thirty sections. Seated on the ground around the master and pupil, the Beni Amurs greedily drank in the divine words. "God is great!" they exclaimed. "Gabriel himself was not more beautiful than this young man when he deposited the eternal revelation in the heart of the Prophet."

Hafiz not only taught his nephew the text of the Koran, but also repeated to him the words of the Prophet which have been handed down to us by his friends. He taught him the four great duties enjoined by God on all who would be saved,—the five daily

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prayers, the giving of one fortieth in alms, the fast of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca; and held up to his detestation the seven great sins,—those sins which beget seven hundred others, and which destroy the soul,—idolatry, that crime which God, according to his explicit declaration, never pardons; murder; the charge of adultery falsely brought against an honest woman; wrong done to orphans; usury; flight in an expedition against the infidels; and disobedience to parents. “Oh, my son,” he exclaimed, at the close of each lesson, “thou who, by the decree of God, hast been placed among the number of those who have received the Scriptures, daily repeat that divine promise which is our whole strength and comfort here below: ‘Whoever obeyeth God and the apostle, they shall be with those unto whom God has been gracious, of the prophets, and the sincere, and the martyrs, and the righteous, and these are most excellent company. This is bounty from God, and from God nothing is hidden.’”

In order not to weary Abdallah, Hafiz often interspersed his teachings with the stories of some of those innumerable prophets to whose keeping God confided the truth while awaiting the coming of Mohammed. Sometimes it was Adam, our first father, to whom God in his goodness taught the name of every living thing on earth. By the command of the Lord, these creatures, born of fire, adored man, born of the dust of the earth. A single one refused, the ungrateful Eblis, urged by his pride to destruction. Unhappily,

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Adam and Eve suffered themselves to be tempted by the enemy, and ate of the forbidden fruit. To punish their disobedience, God drove them from Paradise. Adam was flung upon the island of Serendib, where his footprint may still be seen, and Eve fell at Djiddah, where she was doomed to live two centuries in solitude. God, however, at last took pity on the unhappy couple, and Gabriel again reunited them on Mount Arafat, near that miraculous spot where Abraham and Ishmael were to found the holy Caaba.

At another time the cripple would tell how God showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might know true science. Reared in the faith of his fathers, the son of Azer worshipped the stars. When the night overshadowed him, he saw a star and cried, "This is my Lord!" but when it set he said, "I like not gods which set." And when he saw the moon rising he cried, "This is my Lord!" but when he saw it set he said, "Verily, if my Lord direct me not, I shall become as one of the people who go astray." And when he saw the sun rising he said, "This is my Lord; this is the greatest!" but when he saw it set he said, "Oh, my people, I am clear of your idolatrous worship." The son of Azer understood that the stars scattered through the heavens revealed a higher hand, as the footprints on the sand tell of the traveller that has gone before.

Like a true Mussulman, Abraham had no sooner found the true faith than he broke all the idols of his people except Baal, on whose neck he hung the axe

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with which he had demolished them. When the furious Chaldeans asked who had treated their gods in such a manner, "It is Baal," said Abraham; "ask him, and see what he will answer you." "An idol can not speak," cried the Chaldeans; and they said, "Thou art an unbeliever!" But who can enlighten those who have eyes, yet see not! They are blinded by the very light of truth. Furious at having been discomfited by a child, Nimrod, the King of the Chaldeans, ordered Abraham to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Vain cruelty! The Lord Eternal holds the power of life and death. By the command of God, the fire consumed none but the unbelievers. For Abraham, the funeral pile turned to a verdant meadow, and the flames that surrounded him to a cool and refreshing breeze. It is thus that the Lord lifts up the just and humbles the proud.

Who could exhaust the sacred stories which have been handed down to us by the Koran and tradition? They are more numerous and more beautiful than the stars in a summer sky. Hafiz told them as he had received them from his fathers, and Abdallah repeated them with the like ardor and faith. Sometimes it was of David, the blacksmith king, to whom God taught the art of fabricating coats of mail to protect the faithful; sometimes it was of Solomon, under whose dominion the Lord placed the winds, the birds, and the genii. Or it was of Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, when, seated on her throne of gold and silver set with precious stones, she received Solomon's letter,

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brought her by a bird, kissed the seal, at which Satan trembled, and became a Mussulman at the voice of the wisest of kings. Or it was of the sleeping companions in the cavern, who awaited the reign of truth three hundred and nine years, with their faithful dog, El Rakim, crouched at their feet. Or it was of the sacred camel brought forth from the rock at the prayer of Saleh, to confound the unbelief of the Talmudites. When did God tire of working miracles to succor the faithful?

Of all these marvellous stories, to which the Bedouins never tired of listening, the one which Halima oftenest asked of her son was that of Job, that faithful servant who turned to God in the midst of his anguish. In vain his wife, weary of seeing him suffer, consented to worship Eblis to regain their lost happiness. Job refused assistance from this accursed hand. If he raised his body, eaten by worms, on the dung-hill, it was to lift to the Lord that touching prayer which won pardon from God for the wretched sufferer, "Verily evil hath afflicted me, but thou art the most merciful of those who show mercy,"—beautiful words which one of the faithful alone could utter.

Hafiz was one of the faithful, but he was also a Bedouin, proud of his race; a soldier who loved the fray of battle. "Think, my son," he would often say to Abdallah, "think of the privileges which the Prophet has won for us, and which we must defend to the death. To render our life easy God has given us gardens, living springs of water, innumerable cat-

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tle, the dourah,¹ and the palm-tree; to render it glorious, he has given us a noble pedigree, a country that has never been conquered, and a liberty that no master has ever polluted. We are the kings of the desert. Our turbans are our diadems, our tents are our palaces, our sabres are our ramparts, and God's own word is our law. Your father fell like a martyr on the field of battle. Among your ancestors, for one who by chance has breathed his last under a tent, three have fallen in the desert, their lance in their hand. They point you the way; they understood the divine saying, 'Let them therefore fight for the religion of God who part with the present life for that which is to come; for whosoever fighteth for the religion of God, whether he be slain or be victorious, we will surely give him a great reward. The provision of this life is but small; but the future shall be better for him who feareth God.'

Have you seen the war-horse pawing the earth and snuffing the wind at the sound of the trumpet? Such was Abdallah when Hafiz talked to him of battle; his heart throbbed, his eyes grew dim, and his face flushed. "O God!" he cried, "grant that it may soon be my time; permit me to crush the infidel, and make me worthy of the people from which I have sprung!"

The child of the desert was beautiful indeed in his long blue robe, confined at the waist by a leather

¹ The sorgho, the principal cereal of the East Indians and the Arabs, which they use like maize and rice.

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thong passed half a score of times round his body. His thick brown hair shaded his face and fell in curls upon his neck from under his hood. His eyes sparkled with a softer light than the planets that twinkle in the heavens, as, holding in his hand a shining lance wound round with silver thread, he walked slowly with the grace of a child and the dignity of a man, speaking only when necessary and never laughing. When he returned from the pasture, carrying the young lambs in the skirt of his robe while the sheep followed him bleating and rubbing their heads against his hand, the shepherds, his companions, stopped to see him pass, and he seemed like Joseph adored by the eleven stars. And at evening, when he raised the stone from the common well, with a strength above his age, and watered the flocks, the women forgot to fill their pitchers, and cried, "He is as handsome as his father!" to which the men responded, "And he will also be as brave."





IV

THE RECOGNITION



TIME had rolled onward since the day that Halima had carried the son of the wealthy Mansour to her tent. Omar was fifteen years old, and was still unacquainted with the secret of his birth. The rude jests of his companions had more than once made him feel that he was not a Beni Amur, and that the blood in his veins was not so pure as that of Abdallah; but although he was called Omar, the little merchant, no one in the tribe knew who was the Egyptian's father, and he himself believed that he was an orphan, adopted by Halima's goodness, and destined to live in the desert.

One evening, as the brothers were returning from the fields, they were surprised to see several richly caparisoned camels at the door of the tent, together with a mule covered with a rich carpet and held by a negro dressed in white.

"Whose mule is this," said Omar, "and what has it brought?"

"It is your father's," answered the slave, who easily

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recognized Mansour's son by his features; "we have come for you from Djiddah."

"Who is my father?" asked the Egyptian, greatly moved.

"Your father," returned the negro, "is the rich Mansour, the syndic of the Djiddah merchants, and the sultan of the sons of Egypt. There is not a bale of goods, great or small, that comes into the harbor or goes out of the three city gates that is not first offered to him for his disposal. At Yambo, Suez, Khartum, and Cairo, your father's warehouses are kept by his numerous slaves; and so great is his fortune that his servants never consult him about any business involving less than a hundred thousand piastres."

"Oh, my father, where are you?" cried the young man, rushing into the tent. "Praised be God, who has given me a father so worthy of my love!" And he threw himself into Mansour's arms with an ardor that delighted the old merchant and called forth a sigh from Halima.

Early the next morning they set out for Djiddah, to the great sorrow of the Bedouin woman, who could not bear to separate from the child whom she alone had cherished for so many years. "Adieu, my son, and dearer than my son," said she, covering him with tears and caresses. Omar was more courageous; he quitted his mother with the joy of a captive who at once regains freedom and fortune. Abdallah accompanied his brother to the city by the wish of Man-

sour. To show the Bedouin how far the consideration attached to wealth in a city like Djiddah raised a merchant above the shepherds of the desert, and to make him feel that his mother and he should esteem themselves too happy in having loved and served Omar for fifteen years, was Mansour's fashion of paying his debt of gratitude. The rich leave their folly and vanity only beyond the tomb.

No sooner had they reached Djiddah than Omar broke forth into transports of joy. He was an exile returning to his native land. Everything charmed him,—the narrow streets, with their great stone houses; the port, where the ships were unloading casks of sugar, sacks of coffee, and bales of cotton; and the motley crowd that was thronging toward the bazaar. Turks, Syrians, Greeks, Arabs, Persians, East Indians, blacks of every shade; Jews, pilgrims, dervishes, beggars; Nile merchants mounted on beautifully caparisoned mules; donkey-drivers leading women enveloped in black mantles, and looking like phantoms of which naught was visible but the eyes; camel-drivers shouting to the crowd to open a passage; Arnauts with an audacious and threatening air, proud of their Damascus weapons and flowing fustanella; peaceful smokers seated with crossed legs at the doors of the coffee-houses; slaves led to market,—all this was to Omar a paradise more enchanting than any of which he had ever dreamed. In such an abode, what could not be bought and what could not be sold? Had he not learned the price of all manner

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of things from his father on the road? Did he not already know how to rate the integrity of a *cadi*, the scruples of a sheik, and even the conscience of a pacha?

At the end of a narrow and gloomy alley stood the house of Mansour. There was nothing about the building calculated to attract attention; the ground floor was bare and uninviting, and furnished only with a few rush mats along the whitewashed walls; but on ascending to the next story, which was carefully closed, and furnished with blinds that defied both the sun and curiosity, magnificent rooms met the eye, covered with Turkey carpets, and surrounded with velvet divans embroidered with silver. The travellers were scarcely seated when a chased silver salver was brought them, loaded with jellied fruits. While one slave poured rose-water on Abdallah's bronzed hands, and presented him a napkin fringed with gold, another burned incense before old Mansour, who stroked his beard and clothes to impregnate them with the fragrant smoke; coffee was then served in tiny porcelain cups, set in stands of gold filigree-work, after which exquisite sherbets, prepared from the extract of violets and the juice of pomegranates expressed through the rind, were offered them. Lastly, three little negroes, dressed in scarlet and covered with bracelets and necklaces, lighted long jasmine pipes and presented one to each guest, then all three seated themselves on the ground, attentive and silent.

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They smoked long without speaking. Mansour was enjoying the delight which he saw in his son and the admiration which he supposed in the Arab. But the Bedouin's face did not change; amid all this luxury he was as grave and tranquil as if in the midst of his flocks. What are the luxuries of this world to him who expects the lasting rewards which God has in store for the faithful?

"Well, my son," said old Mansour at last, turning toward Abdallah, "are you content with your journey?"

"Father," replied the young man, "I thank you for your hospitality. Your heart is even richer than your treasure."

"Well, well," returned the merchant; "but what I want to know is what you think of Djiddah? Would you like to stay with us?"

"No. The city is tainted; the air is pestilential, the water impure. Then those idle dervishes, displaying to all eyes their impudence and their covetousness, and those slaves who stand there to deprive us of the use of our hands, and who spy out our passions to serve them! Huzza for the desert! Our terrible winds are sweeter to me than the hot, heavy air of this prison. Among the tents there are none but men. Each one rights himself, lance in hand. The dog that begs through cowardice is thrust out; the haughty, who know not how to respect those better than themselves, are humbled."

"Your words are golden, my son," said Mansour,

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running his fingers through his long beard; "a Wahhabite could not be more austere. I thought like you when I was a child and recited my nurse's lessons. Stay with us for a time; become a merchant; when you see how fortune invests the vilest of men with authority, youth, and virtue, how the powerful of the day, the women, and even the saints fall down and worship the metal which you despise, you will change your mind, and prefer even the unsavory odor of cities. It is beautiful to live like the lark, free in space; but sooner or later all are snared like it. The dourou is the king of the world, and the day comes when the bravest, like the wisest, is the servant of the richest."

"I know," returned Abdallah, proudly, "that nothing satisfies the sons of Adam. The dust of the grave alone has power to fill their bellies; but in the desert, at least, an ounce of honor is worth more than a hundredweight of gold. With God's aid, I will live like my ancestors. He who desires naught will always be free. Farewell, therefore, Mansour; farewell, my brother. To-day our roads part; may that which you take lead you to the end which all the faithful should desire!"

"Farewell, my good Abdallah," answered Omar. "Each of us follows his destiny. What is written is written. You were born to dwell among the tents, and I to be a merchant. Farewell; I shall never forget the friendship of my childhood; if ever I am in need of a stout arm, be sure that I shall have recourse to you."

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"Thanks, my brother," cried the Bedouin; and taking Omar in his arms, he pressed him tenderly to his heart, without restraining or hiding his tears.

Omar tranquilly received these proofs of friendship, and when Abdallah, with drooping head and dejected mien, had quitted the house after more than once looking back, "Say," said he to his father, "what can you have been thinking of, to leave me so long with that Bedouin? Suppose you had died, and I had appeared to claim your inheritance, the old men of the city would have said, 'We have known Mansour all our lives, and have never heard of his having either son or daughter,' and then who would have been your heir if not the pacha? Carry me quickly to the bazaar, introduce me to all your friends, the merchants, and, above all, make me your partner, and give me a warehouse of my own. I feel an uncontrollable desire to handle gold. I have already learned to calculate among the tents, and know how to treat men in order to gain much and risk little. You shall not blush for your son."

"My child," cried Mansour, raising his trembling hands to heaven, "wisdom speaks through your mouth; but the day is too far advanced to go out, and, besides, your dress is not suitable. To-morrow we will go to the bazaar; to-morrow all Djiddah shall know my glory and happiness."

All night Omar dreamed of gold and silver; all night Mansour tossed on his bed, unable to close his eyes; he saw himself born anew in a son shrewder,

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more cunning, more covetous, and more avaricious than himself. "Ah!" he exclaimed, in his joy, "I am the happiest of fathers. The dervish did not deceive me; if my son escape the perils that threaten him, who knows where the wealth of my house will stop!"

Madman, thou forgettest that if gold is a blessing to him that gives it, it is a poison to him that hoards it. He who harbors avarice in his heart, harbors there the enemy of mankind; and woe to him who chooses Satan for a companion!





V

THE NEW SOLOMON

THE next morning at daybreak, Mansour led his son to the bath, and dressed him in a style befitting his new condition. A silken robe, striped with bright colors, and confined round the waist by a Cashmere girdle, a flowing caftan of the finest and softest cloth, and a white embroidered cap, round which was twisted a muslin turban,—such was the elegant costume brought by the most fashionable tailor of Djiddah. In this dress the features of the Egyptian seemed harsher and his complexion more swarthy than ever. The tailor, however, thought otherwise; he did nothing but praise the beauty and grace of Omar, and pity the ladies of the city who should look with indifference on his countenance, more beautiful than the moon at its full. When nothing more remained of the Bedouin of the day before, breakfast was served and sherbet brought in; then, after sundry counsels from old Mansour, Omar, mounted on a mule, and modestly falling behind his father, took the way with him to the bazaar.

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The Egyptian led his son to a shop which was narrow, like all in the market, but crowded with precious articles. Shawls from India, satins and brocades from China, carpets from Bassora, yataghans in their chased silver scabbards, pipes mounted with amber and adorned with rubies, rosaries of black coral, necklaces of sequins and pearls,—all that could seduce women, all that could ruin men, was found in this warehouse of perdition. A stone bench ran before the shop. Mansour seated himself on the cushions and lighted his pipe; Omar took his beads and began to recite his prayers, without looking at the crowd.

As soon as the merchants perceived the syndic, they rose in a body, and went to repeat the Fát-háh, and to wish him good-morning. Every one looked with surprise at the new-comer, and asked his neighbor in a whisper who the stranger could be,—whether a relative of the Egyptian, or a young slave richly dressed in order to draw customers. Mansour called to the sheik, and pointing to Omar, "This is my son," said he,—“my partner and successor.”

“Your son!” exclaimed the sheik. “Who ever heard that the rich Mansour had an heir?”

“I wished to deceive the evil eye,” replied the old man; “this is why I have had my son brought up at a distance and in secret. I did not intend to present him to you till his beard was grown; but I was getting old, I became impatient; and to-day, with your permission, I shall place him in the bazaar to learn of you the art of buying and selling.”

"Mansour is always wise," replied the merchants, as they vied with each other in congratulating the happy father of such a son. "May the Lord," they exclaimed, "preserve both root and branch!"

In the midst of these wishes, which tickled the Egyptian's pride, the sheik took up the conversation.

"Among us," said he to Mansour, "when a son or daughter is born, even the poor man invites his friends to rejoice with him; have you forgotten us?"

"Honor me with a visit this evening," replied the old man; "you shall be welcome."

An hour after, a messenger, carrying a huge bouquet, went through the market offering a flower to each merchant, with the words, "Recite the Fát-háh for the Prophet." The prayer ended, "Mansour entertains you," added the messenger, "to take coffee with him this evening at his house."

"Mansour is the prince of the generous," returned the invited guests; "with the blessing of God, we will pay our respects this evening to the syndic."

At the appointed time, the Egyptian and his son received the merchants in the little garden, where a splendid feast awaited the guests. Lambs stuffed with almonds and pistachio nuts, rice with saffron, cream sauces flavored with pepper, rose jellies, pastry of all kinds,—nothing was spared to honor guests of such consequence. For the first time Mansour desired that the poor should partake of his joy, and ordered the remains of the feast, with some small silver coin, to be distributed among them before the

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door, which was enough to fill the street with huzzahs and blessings, and to cause the name of the generous Omar and the rich Mansour to resound from one end of Djiddah to the other.

Coffee served and pipes lighted, the sheik took Omar by the hand. "Behold our friend's son," said he to the merchants, "who desires to enter our honorable company. I beseech each one to recite the Fát-háh for the Prophet."

While the prayer was being three times repeated, the sheik wound a shawl around Omar's waist, tying a knot after each Fát-háh. The ceremony finished, the young man kissed the hand of the sheik and the other spectators, beginning with the eldest. His eyes sparkled with joy. He was a Djiddah merchant; he was rich; the world was opening before him.

The rest of the evening was passed in conversation, all bearing upon trade. Omar did not open his lips; he stood near the elders of the party, who did not weary of talking to a young man who listened with such attention and respect. They told him how a good salesman should always ask four times the value of the article haggled for, and should never lose his coolness, which is the secret of the trade. Trading is like trout-fishing; it is necessary to draw on the customer and give him line till, wearied and dazzled, he at length knows no longer how to defend himself. To toy with a rosary, offer coffee or a pipe, talk of indifferent things, preserve an unmoved countenance, and yet kindle desire in the soul of the

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purchaser, this is a difficult act, and it is not to be learned in a day.

"But," they added, caressing Omar, "you are in a good school, my son; neither Jew nor even Armenian can overreach the wise Mansour."

"Is commerce nothing more than this?" said the young man in his heart; "in that case I have no need of these people. To think only of oneself, and to make use of the passions or weaknesses of others to strip fools of the wealth they dote on,—I have known this from my birth; I did nothing else in the desert; my masters will be shrewd indeed if, before six months are past, I do not give them a lesson."

A few days after, Mansour repaired to the *cadi* on account of a suit, the issue of which troubled him but little. A private conversation with the judge had given him hopes of the justice of his cause. The old man asked his son to accompany him, in order to accustom him early to deal with the law. The *cadi* was seated in the courtyard of the mosque. He was a fat, good-looking man, who never thought, and talked little, which, added to his large turban and his air of perpetual astonishment, gave him a great reputation for justice and gravity. The spectators were numerous; the principal merchants were seated on the ground on carpets, forming a semi-circle around the magistrate. Mansour took his seat a little way from the sheik, and Omar placed himself between the two, his curiosity strongly excited to see how the law was obeyed, and how it was trifled with in case of need.

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The first case called was that of a young Banian, as yellow as an orange, with loose-flowing robes and an effeminate air, who had lately landed from India, and who complained of having been cheated by one of Mansour's rivals.

"Having found a casket full of diamonds among the effects bequeathed to me by my father at Delhi," said the young man, "I set out for Egypt in order to live there in opulence on the proceeds of their sale. I was obliged by bad weather to put in at Djiddah, where I was retained by the pleasures of the city, and soon found myself in want of money. I was assured that, if I wished to dispose of my diamonds, I should find a good market here. I went to the bazaar, and inquired for a dealer in precious stones. The richest, I was told, was Mansour; the most honest was Ali the jeweller. I applied to the latter. As soon as he learned the object of my visit, he welcomed me like a son, and, refusing to talk of business at the bazaar, carried me home with him. For several days he treated me in the most generous manner, gained my confidence by every kind of attention, and advanced me all the money I needed. One day, after dinner, when I was not quite sober, he asked me for the casket, examined the diamonds one by one, and said, with feigned pity, 'My child, these stones are of little value in Arabia and Egypt. The rocks of our desert furnish them by thousands; my coffers are full of them.' To prove the truth of what he said, he opened the box, and taking therefrom a

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diamond thrice as large as any of mine, gave it to the slave that was with me.

“‘What will become of me?’ I cried. ‘I have no other fortune; I thought myself rich, and here I am poor, a stranger, and far from my family and country.’

“‘My child,’ replied the treacherous jeweller, ‘I conceived a friendship for you at first sight. A Musulman never forsakes his friends in trouble. Leave this casket with me, and, to oblige you, I will give you a price for it such as no one else would offer. Choose whatever you wish in Djiddah,—gold, silver, or coral,—and in two hours I promise to give you an equal weight of what you have chosen in exchange for your Indian stones.’

“On returning home, night brought reflection. I made inquiries, and soon learned that Ali had been fooling me. What he had given to the slave was nothing but a bit of crystal. Diamonds are scarcer at Djiddah than in India, and are worth ten times their weight in gold. I demanded my casket. Ali refused to restore it. Venerable magistrate, my sole hope is in your justice. I entreat you to espouse the cause of a stranger; and may the wretch who has ruined me drink boiling water for all eternity!”

It was Ali's turn to speak. “Illustrious servant of God,” said he to the cadî, “this young man's story is true in but one particular, namely, that we have made a bargain, and that I am ready to keep it. All the rest is of his own invention. What matters it

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what I gave the slave? Could a sensible man have seen in it anything else than a jest? Did I force the stranger to leave his casket in my hands? Was it my fault if want of money made him accept my conditions? Why does he accuse me of treachery? Have I broken my word, and has he kept his?"

"Young man," said the *cadi* to the Banian, "have you witnesses to prove that Ali deceived you as to the value of your merchandise? If not, I shall put the accused on his oath, as the law decrees."

A Koran was brought. Ali placed his right hand on the sacred book, and repeated three times, "In the name of God the Omnipotent, and by the word of God that is contained in this book, I swear that I have not deceived this stranger. I swear it here to-day," he added, turning toward the assembly, "as I shall swear it on the judgment-day before God as *cadi*, with the angels for witnesses."

"Wretch," said the Banian, "thou art among those whose feet go down to destruction. Thou hast thrown away thy soul."

"That may be," whispered the sheik to Omar, "but he has gained a huge fortune. This Ali is a shrewd knave."

"He is no ordinary man," added Mansour. "This may be called a game well played."

Omar smiled, and while Ali was enjoying the success of his ruse, he approached the stranger, who burst into tears.

"Do you wish me to help you to gain the suit?" asked he.

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"Yes," cried the East Indian; "confound this wretch, and you may ask of me what you will. But you are only a child; you can do nothing."

"I only ask you to have confidence in me for a few moments," returned the Egyptian. "Accept Ali's bargain; let me choose in your stead, and fear nothing."

"What can I fear after having lost all?" murmured the stranger, letting his head fall again on his bosom like a man bereft of all hope. Nevertheless, he turned to the cadi, and, bowing respectfully, "Oh, my lord and master," said he, "thy slave implores a last favor of thy mercy; let the bargain be consummated, since the law decrees it, but permit this young man to choose in my stead what I shall receive in payment."

A profound silence ensued. Omar rose, and bowing to the cadi, "Ali," said he to the jeweller, "you have doubtless brought the casket, and can tell us the weight thereof?"

"Here it is," said the merchant; "it weighs twenty pounds. Choose what you will, I repeat, if the thing asked for is to be found in Djiddah, you shall have it within two hours, otherwise the bargain is null and void. All know that my word is sacred, and that I never break it."

"What we desire," said Omar, raising his voice, "is ants' wings, half male and half female. You have two hours in which to furnish the twenty pounds you have promised us."

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"This is absurd," cried the jeweller; "it is impossible. I should need half a score of persons and six months' labor to satisfy this foolish demand. It is trifling with justice to introduce these childish caprices into this place."

"Are there any winged ants in Djiddah?" asked the cadi.

"Of course," answered the merchants, laughing; "they are one of the plagues of Egypt. Our houses are full of them, and it would be doing us a great service to rid us of them."

"Then Ali must keep his promise or give back the casket," said the cadi. "This young man was mad to sell his diamonds weight for weight; he is mad to exact such a payment. So much the better for Ali the first time; so much the worse for him the second. Justice has not two weights and measures. Every bargain holds good before the law. Either furnish twenty pounds of ants' wings, or restore the casket to the Banian."

"A righteous judgment!" shouted the spectators, wonder-struck at such equity.

The stranger, beside himself with joy, embraced Omar, calling him his savior and master; nor did he stop there; taking from the casket three diamonds of the finest water, as large as nightingales' eggs, he forced them on Omar, who put them in his girdle, respectfully kissed the Banian's right hand, and seated himself by his father, his gravity unmoved by the gaze of the assembly.

"Well done, my friend," said Mansour, "but Ali is a novice; had he not neglected the *cadi* he would have gained his suit. It is my turn now; mark me well, and profit by the lesson I shall give you. Stop, young man!" he cried to the East Indian, who was carrying off the diamonds, "we have an account to settle. I entreat the illustrious *cadi* to keep this casket for a moment; there may be those here who have a better right to it than either this stranger or the prudent Ali."

There was universal surprise among the spectators, and all listened to the new claimant.

"The day before yesterday," said Mansour, "a veiled lady entered my shop in the bazaar and asked to look at some necklaces. Nothing that I showed her pleased her taste, and she was about to leave the shop, when she spied a sealed box in a corner, and entreated me to open it. This box contained a set of topazes which were no longer at my disposal, having been already sold to the Pacha of Egypt. I told the lady this, but she insisted on at least seeing the gift destined for a sultana. A woman's wish is a thing not easily thwarted. There are three kinds of obstinacy that are irresistible,—that of princes, of children, and of women. I was so weak as to yield. The stranger looked at the necklace, tried it on, and declared that she would have it at any price. On my refusal, she quitted the bazaar, loading me with threats and maledictions. An hour after, this young man entered my shop, and bursting into tears, kissed my hand and entreated me to sell him the

necklace, saying that his own life and that of the lady depended on it. 'Ask of me what you will, my father,' said he, 'but I must have these gems or die.' I have a weakness for young men, and, though I knew the danger of disappointing my master the pacha, I was unable to resist his supplications. 'Take the topazes,' said I to the stranger, 'but promise to give whatever I may ask in exchange.' 'My head itself, if you will, for you have saved my life,' he replied, as he carried off the necklace. We were without witnesses," added Mansour, turning to the Banian, "but is not my story true?"

"Yes," said the young man, "and I beg your pardon for not having satisfied you sooner: you know the cause. Now that I have recovered my fortune, thanks to your son, ask of me what you desire."

"What I desire," said Mansour, nodding to the pacha, who was gazing fixedly at a palm tree, "what I desire is this casket with all its contents. It is not too much for a man who risks his life by disobeying the pacha. Illustrious magistrate, your excellency has declared that all bargains hold good before the law. This young man has promised to give me what I please; now I declare that nothing pleases me but these diamonds."

The cadî raised his head and looked about the assembly as if to interrogate the faces, then stroked his beard and relapsed into his meditations.

"Ali is defeated," said the sheik to Omar, with a smile. "The fox is not yet born more cunning than the worthy Mansour."

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"I am lost!" cried the Banian. "Oh, Omar, have you saved me only to cast me down from the highest pinnacle of joy to the depths of despair? Persuade your father to spare me, that I may owe my life to you a second time."

"Well, my son," said Mansour, "doubtless you are shrewd, but this will teach you that your father knows rather more than you do. The *cadi* is about to decide; try whether you can dictate his decree."

"It is mere child's play," answered Omar, shrugging his shoulders; "but since you desire it, my father, you shall lose your suit." He rose, and taking a *piastre* from his girdle, put it into the hand of the Banian, who laid it before the judge.

"Illustrious *cadi*," said he, "this young man is ready to fulfill his engagement. This is what he offers Mansour,—a *piastre*. In itself, this coin is of little value;¹ but examine it closely, and you will see that it is stamped with the likeness of the sultan, our glorious master. May God destroy and confound all who disobey his highness! It is this precious likeness that we offer you," added Omar, turning to Mansour; "if it pleases you, you are paid; to dare to say that it displeases you is an insult to the pacha, a crime punishable by death; and I am sure that our worthy *cadi* will not become your accomplice,—he who has always been and always will be the faithful servant of all the sultans."

When Omar had finished speaking, all eyes turned

¹ About five cents.

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toward the cadi, who, more impenetrable than ever, stroked his face and waited for the old man to come to his aid. Mansour was agitated and embarrassed. The silence of the cadi and the assembly terrified him, and he cast a supplicating glance toward his son.

"My father," said Omar, "permit this young man to thank you for the lesson of prudence which you have given him by frightening him a little. He knows well that it was you who sent me to his aid, and that all this is a farce. No one is deceived by hearing the son oppose the father; and who has ever doubted Mansour's experience and generosity?"

"No one," interrupted the cadi, starting up like a man suddenly awakened from a dream, "and I least of all; and this is why I have permitted you to speak, my young Solomon. I wished to honor in you the wisdom of your father; but another time avoid meddling with his highness's name; it is not safe to sport with the lion's paws. The matter is settled. The necklace is worth a hundred thousand piastres, is it not, Mansour? This madcap shall give you, therefore, a hundred thousand piastres, and all parties will be satisfied."

Despite his modesty, Omar could not escape the gratitude of the East Indian or the praises of the merchants. The former tried to force the casket into his hands; and it was impossible to prevent him from seizing the bridle of the mule that carried Omar, and accompanying to his door him whom he styled the most generous and wisest of men. The

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merchants, on their side, heaped congratulations on Mansour; and the celebrated case which called forth the wisdom of him whom the sagacious *cadi* styled the new Solomon is still talked of at Djiddah.

Once at home, Mansour broke into reproaches. "I can not understand you, my son," said he. "I had a fortune in my hands, and you have snatched it from me. Is this your idea of business? Is this the respect that you show your father?"

"Have patience, my father," replied Omar, coldly. "To-day I have made myself a reputation for prudence and probity. It is a noise that will be lasting, a first impression that will never be effaced. Reputation is a jewel which nothing can replace; it is ten thousand times more valuable capital than your diamonds. All distrust Mansour's cunning, but all will confide, like this foreigner, in Omar's honesty and integrity. The bait is thrown, the trout will not be long in coming."

Mansour stood confounded. He had desired a son that should be worthy of himself; he began to fear that Eblis had granted his prayer too literally. He admired Omar indeed; such calculation at so tender an age could not but delight a man whose whole life had been one of calculation. But—it must be confessed to the old man's shame—this precocious experience chilled his heart, and, to tell the truth, he stood appalled before this sage of fifteen.



VI

VIRTUE REWARDED



NOTHING was wanting to Mansour's happiness; during the five remaining years of his life the merchant could fully enjoy the education and success of his son. He saw all his trade pass into Omar's hands; the wealth of his house became enormous, and, as is always the case, public esteem increased in proportion to wealth. How could Omar help succeeding? He had everything in his favor—an abundance of money, few passions and no scruples. None had ever combined to such a degree what constitutes genius in business,—love of gold and contempt of men. Mansour could therefore breathe his last in peace. His life had been long, disease had spared his old age, his dreams were realized, and he was sure of leaving an heir behind him who would keep and increase the fortune accumulated with such difficulty; yet it is affirmed that the Egyptian died with his heart filled with rage, crying out that no one loved him, execrating his folly, and trembling at the sight of his

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treasures, as if the gold, heated in the infernal fire, already lay a burning weight on his breast and brow.

Omar heard of his father's death with complete resignation. Business had called him away from his dying bed; business was his consolation. His courage was worthy of admiration; at the mere sight of a piastre, he dried up his tears and stifled his sorrow.

Left alone with so noble an inheritance, the son of Mansour set no bounds to his desires. Nothing escaped his schemes; it seemed as if from within his little house in Djiddah, like the spider in his web, he drew all the wealth of the world into his invisible net. Rice and sugar from India; gum and coffee from Yemen; ivory, gold dust, and slaves from Abyssinia; corn from Egypt; tissues from Syria; ships and caravans,—all came to Omar. Yet never did man welcome good fortune more modestly. To see him in the street in his rusty clothes and scanty turban, his eyes cast down, telling his wooden beads with his fingers, he would not have been thought worth twenty thousand piastres. Nothing betrayed the rich man in his conversation; he was familiar with his inferiors, free and easy with his equals, cringing toward those from whom he hoped for anything, and respectful toward those who had it in their power to do him an injury. According to him, it was a great mistake to attribute to him a large fortune; all this merchandise was not his property, but consignments from foreign correspondents who had confidence in him,—a confidence which must have cost him dear,

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for he constantly complained of losing money. If he bought the handsomest slaves, the richest perfumes, the choicest tobacco, and the rarest stuffs, it was always for some pacha or foreign trader. It was whispered that these treasures never left the Egyptian's house—who can silence men's tongues?—but nothing certain was known. Omar had no friends, transacted his business at the bazaar, and received no visits. Whether he was poor or rich, a sage or an egotist, humble or hypocritical, was the secret of Satan.

His prudence was on a par with his modesty. Beginning with the pacha and ending with the collector of customs, there was not an officer at Djiddah, great or small, with whose pipe-bearer, groom, or favorite slave Omar was not acquainted. He was not fond of giving, and often repeated the maxim of the Koran that prodigals are the brethren of Satan; but he knew how to open his hand at the right time, and no one ever repented a service rendered this honest man. Pachas pass away quickly at Djiddah; the hand of the Turk is heavy, and the richest merchants were often forced to pay a ransom. The son of Mansour alone escaped these loans, which are never repaid. Within a week, by one means or another, he was the friend, it was even said, the banker, of the new governor, and the storm which had threatened him always burst on other heads than his, so that he was an object of astonishment and envy to all his brethren.

The day came, however, when his star paled. A

pacha, who had made a fortune in three months in rather too obvious a manner, was recalled to Constantinople, and his successor received orders to be an honest man; the government being anxious to please the Franks, of whom, unhappily, it stood in need, and who were raising a great outcry. Turk as he was, the new pacha understood how to give satisfaction in high places. The day after his arrival, he went in disguise to buy provisions of the chief butcher and baker in Djiddah. The moltesib, or inspector of the market, was forewarned, and was ready in the street, with his clerks and great scales, to weigh what the pacha had just bought. The twelve pounds of bread fell short two ounces, and the huge quarter of mutton one ounce. The crime was a flagrant one, and the offenders were speedily brought to justice. The pacha overwhelmed the wretches who fattened on the sweat of the people with abuse and reproaches, and, in his just anger, refused to listen to their defence, but ordered them to be instantly stripped, bound, and bastinadoed, after which by express command the baker was nailed by the ear to his shop door, and the butcher was fastened to one of the windows of the great mosque, after having his nose pierced with an iron wire from which the ounce of meat which he had stolen was suspended. The populace heaped every species of outrage upon the two unfortunates; God was glorified throughout the whole city; the pacha was styled the friend of the people, the lover of justice, and the new Haroun Al-Raschid;

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and the story of this virtuous deed, after rejoicing the sultan, spread to the West, to the confusion and despair of the infidels.

On the same evening several of the merchants freighted a ship for Egypt, having suddenly learned that their presence was needed at Cairo. Omar, instead of giving way to terror, calmly stroked his beard. "Virtue is a kind of merchandise not in the market," thought he; "when it is needed, therefore, it must be bought dear." Whereupon he repaired to the bazaar, chanced to meet the pacha's secretary, made him sit down beside him, and offered him a pipe by mistake that had been designed for the sultan.

"It is always bad policy to do justice to the people," said Omar to the secretary; "once led into bad habits, they grow exacting. It is a death-blow to large speculations." The secretary gazed at his magnificent pipe, and thought Omar a man of sense.

Alas! the Egyptian had judged but too rightly. The first market-day grain was found to have risen two piastres an ardeb.¹ The populace became excited; two men especially talked with extreme vehemence,—the butcher whose nose had been slit, and the one-eyed baker. The cheats of yesterday had become the heroes of to-day; they were pitied as victims, and the more they clamored the more they were admired.

From word to deed there is but a step among the populace. The mob was already attempting to burst

¹About five bushels.

open Omar's house when the chief of the police, surrounded by soldiers, came to summon the merchant before the pacha. Omar received the officer with an emotion that may be easily understood, and fervently glued his lips to his hand; but the chief of the police hastily withdrew it, and thrust it clinched into his girdle, as if polluted by the kiss of a criminal. Nevertheless, he neither abused nor maltreated the son of Mansour, to the great displeasure of the populace, which loves justice and is not sorry to see a man accused of crime treated as though convicted of it, especially when he is rich; on the contrary, the chief of the police more than once urged the prisoner to rely on the equity of the governor.

"What is written is written," replied the Egyptian, telling his beads one by one.

The doors of the palace were open, and the people thronged into the courtyard, where the pacha sat, grave and impassive, calming the turbulent passions around him by his presence. The two accusers were brought forward; the governor commanded them to speak without fear. "Justice for all is my duty," said he aloud; "rich or poor, no plunderer shall find grace in my sight."

"God is great and the pacha is just," cried the crowd; whereupon four merchants, quaking with fear, were thrust before the tribunal, all of whom kissed the Koran and swore that Omar had bought from them all the corn imported from Egypt.

"Death! death!" cried the people. The pacha

made a sign that the accused should be heard, and silence ensued.

"Oh, my lord and master," cried Omar, prostrating his forehead on the earth, "your slave places his head in your hands. God loves those who show mercy; the meaner the culprit, the more noble is it not to crush him. Solomon himself spared the ant. It is true that I have bought a few cargoes of corn in the harbor of Djiddah, as any honest merchant may do; but all here, except my enemies, know that the purchase was made for my master the sultan. This corn is designed for the troops posted by your highness on the road to Mecca for the protection of the pilgrims; so, at least, I was told by your highness's secretary, when he gave me the money in your name, which a poor man like me was not able to advance. May my master pardon me for delaying so long to send him the thousand ardebs of corn that he ordered! the chief of the police will tell your highness that force alone has prevented me from obeying him."

"What do you mean by a thousand ardebs of corn?" asked the governor, fiercely.

"Forgive me, my lord," returned Omar, in an agitated voice; "I am so much troubled that it is difficult for me to reckon correctly. I believe that it was fifteen hundred," he added, gazing at the contracted features of the pacha, "if not, indeed, two thousand."

"It was three thousand," said the secretary, handing a paper to the governor. "Here is the order given to this man, in my own handwriting, under the seal of your highness."

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"And has the merchant received the money in payment?" asked the pacha, in a softened tone.

"Yes, your excellency," replied Omar, bowing anew. "The chief of the police, here present, will tell you that he transmitted this order to me, and your highness's secretary advanced me yesterday the two hundred thousand piastres which I needed for the purchase. I am therefore responsible to the pacha for two hundred thousand piastres or three thousand ardebs of corn."

"Then what is all this noise about?" exclaimed the pacha, looking savagely at the two frightened accusers. "Is this the respect you pay my master the sultan? Are the soldiers who protect the holy pilgrims to die of famine in the desert? Seize these two knaves, and give each of them thirty strokes of the bastinado. Justice for all, and no grace for false witnesses. To accuse an innocent man is to rob him of more than life."

"Well said," cried the multitude; "the pacha is right."

The sentence pronounced, the butcher was seized by four soldiers, who did not scruple to do justice in their own cause. A running noose was passed round the prisoner's ankles and fastened to a stake, after which one of the Arnauts, armed with a stick, beat the soles of his feet with all his might. The butcher was a hero in his way; he counted the strokes one by one, and, the punishment being ended, was carried off by his friends, casting furious glances at Omar. The one-eared man was less resolute; at every blow

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he uttered Allah! with a groan that might have melted a heart of stone. At the twelfth stroke Omar kissed the ground before the pacha and entreated pardon for the culprit, which was graciously granted. This was not all; he slipped a douro into the wounded man's hand before all the people, and declared that he had thirty ardebs of corn left, which should be divided among the poor; then returned home amid the blessings of those very persons who, an hour before, were ready to tear him to pieces. Praises or threats, he received both with the same humility or the same indifference. "Allah be praised!" said he, on entering his house. "The pacha drove rather a hard bargain, but now I have him in my hands."

Tranquil in this respect, the son of Mansour resumed his ingenious schemes. Thanks to him, the wealth of Djiddah increased daily. One morning, on waking, the slave-dealers learned with joy that the price of their merchandise had doubled. Unfortunately, they had sold all they had the day before to Omar, to fill an order from Egypt. The next month it was rice, then tobacco, wax, coffee, sugar, and gold dust. Everything rose in value; but Omar's correspondents were always the ones that profited by this sudden rise. In this manner Djiddah became an opulent market, so wealthy, indeed, that the poor could no longer live there; though the rich acquired fortunes by buying the good graces of the Egyptian.

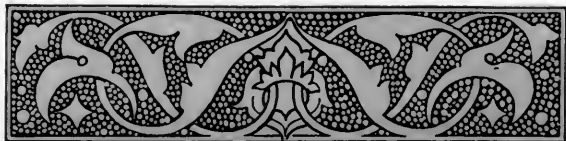
As to him, seated every day at his counter, more honeyed than ever to those of whom he had need, he

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passed the hours in counting on his beads the millions of piastres that he accumulated in all directions. He said to himself in his heart that, despised as he was, he was the master of men, and that should he need the assistance of the sultan, he was rich enough to buy him as well as his seraglio in the bargain.

Men do not grow rich with impunity. It is as impossible to hide fortune as smoke. Despite all his humility, Omar received an invitation from the grand sherif of Mecca to repair to Taif for an important service, which he alone, it was said, could render the descendant of the Prophet. The merchant was less elated by the honor than dismayed at the service which might be asked of him. "The rich have two kinds of foes," said he, "the small and the great. The first are like the ants, that empty the house grain by grain; the second like the lion, the king of robbers, that flays us with one stroke of his paw. But with patience and cunning, it is easier to shake off the lion than the ant. Let us see what the sherif desires; if he wishes to deceive me, I will not be duped by him; if he wishes to be paid, he shall give me the worth of the money."

It was with this respect for the Commander of the Faithful that Omar took the way to Taif. The sight of the desert soon changed the current of his thoughts. The tents and the clumps of palm trees scattered amid the sands recalled his childhood, and for the first time his brother Abdallah recurred to his memory. "Who knows," he thought, "whether by chance I may not need him?"



VII

BARSIM



WHILE the son of Mansour abandoned himself to the love of gain, as if he were to live forever, Abdallah grew in piety, wisdom, and virtue. He had adopted his father's calling, and guided the caravans between Yambo, Medina, and Mecca. As ardent as the young horse that flings his mane to the wind, and as prudent as a graybeard, he had gained the confidence of the principal merchants, and, despite his youth, it was he that was recommended by preference to the pilgrims when they thronged from all parts of the world, in the sacred month, to march seven times round the holy Caaba, encamp on Mount Arafat, and offer sacrifices in the valley of the Mina. These journeys were not without peril. The Bedouin had more than once risked his life to protect those under his keeping, but he had fought so well that all on his route were beginning to respect and fear him. The aged Hafiz never quitted his pupil; crippled as he was, he always found means to be useful. Wherever there are men, there are always

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stout arms and resolute hearts, but not always a faithful friend and wise counsellor.

This life, interspersed with repose and alarm, peace and danger, was delightful to the son of Yusuf. To live a brave man, and die like a soldier, in case of need, as his father had done, was Abdallah's sole ambition. His wishes went no farther. Nevertheless, a cloud overshadowed the serenity of his soul. Halima had told him of the dervish, and the child of the desert thought continually of the mysterious plant which had the gift of bestowing happiness and virtue.

Hafiz, to whom Abdallah first opened his heart, saw in this thought nothing but a snare of Satan. "What is the use of troubling yourself?" he said. "God tells us how to please him in the Koran; he has but one law,—do what he bids, and have no farther anxiety; our business is only with the present moment."

These words failed to appease the curiosity of Abdallah. Hafiz had told him so many marvels which he did not doubt, why should he not believe the story of this talisman to be true, and why might not one of the faithful discover it? "We dwellers among the tents are unlearned," thought the Bedouin; "what hinders me from questioning the pilgrims? God has dispersed the truth abroad throughout the earth; who knows whether some hadji of the East or West may not know the secret which I am seeking? The dervish did not answer my mother at random; and with God's help I will find the right path."

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A short time after, Abdallah guided to Mecca a caravan of pilgrims from Egypt. At the head of the troop was a physician, who talked constantly, laughed without ceasing, and doubted everything,—a Frank, it was said, who had abjured his errors to enter the service of the pacha. Abdallah resolved to question him. As they passed a meadow, he gathered a sprig of shamrock in blossom, and presenting it to the stranger, "Is this plant known in your country?" said he.

"Certainly," answered the physician. "It is what you call *barsim*, and we *trifolium*. It is the Alexandrian trefoil, family leguminosæ, calyx tubular, corolla persistent, petals divided into three segments or foliolæ, and sometimes into four or even five, though this is an exception, or, as we say, a monstrosity."

"Is there no species of shamrock, then, in your country that always has four leaves?"

"No, my young scholar, neither in my country nor anywhere else. Why do you ask?"

Abdallah gave him his confidence, whereupon he burst out laughing. "My child," said he, "the dervish was but fooling your mother. She asked what was impossible of him, and he promised her what was impossible."

"Why should not God create a four-leaved shamrock if he wished?" asked the Bedouin, wounded by the stranger's disdainful smile.

"Why, young man? Because the earth produced all the plants on one day by virtue of a germinating

power which was then exhausted. Since the time of King Solomon there has been nothing new under the sun."

"And if God wished to work a miracle, is his power exhausted?" said Hafiz, who had approached the travellers. "He who drew the seven heavens and the seven earths from the smoke in the space of two days, and set them five hundred days' march from each other; he who ordered the night to envelop the day; he who planted life everywhere,—could he not add a new blade of grass to the millions of plants which he has created for the food and pleasure of man?"

"Certainly," replied the physician, in a mocking tone; "I am too good a Mussulman to pretend the contrary. God might also send his thunderbolt to light my pipe that has just gone out, but he does not wish to do it; on the contrary, he wishes me to ask you for a little fire." With these words he began to puff his pipe and to whistle a foreign air.

"Accursed be unbelievers!" cried the cripple. "Come, my son, leave this miscreant, whose breath is death. If it is in punishment for our sins that God has given the Franks the knowledge that makes their power, it is also to chastise these dogs, and hurry them faster toward the bottomless pit. Madmen, who, to deny God, make use of his very power, and the perpetual miracle of his goodness! Begone, infidel!" he added, raising his hand to heaven, as if to call down its thunders on the head of the renegade;

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"begone, ingrate, who turnest thy back upon the Lord! God beholds the innermost recesses of thy soul; thou wilt die in despair, and wilt feed forever on the tree of hell, with its bitter fruit and thorns."

At the other end of the caravan walked a Persian, with a white beard and a tall sheepskin hat, the poorest and most aged of the band, as well as the most despised, for he was of a heretical nation. The old man seemed unconscious of his poverty, age and solitude. He spoke to no one, ate little, and smoked all day long. Perched on a lean camel, he passed his whole time in turning in his fingers the ninety-nine beads of his rosary, lifting his trembling head meanwhile toward heaven, and murmuring mysterious words. The poor man's gentleness and piety had touched Abdallah's heart. Too young as yet to know hatred, it was with the heretic that the son of Yusuf sought a refuge from the unbeliever.

The animated face and sparkling eyes of the young guide touched the heart of the dervish, who welcomed the confidence that he divined with a kindly smile. "My son," said he, "God give thee the wit of Plato, the knowledge of Aristotle, the star of Alexander, and the happiness of Cosroes!"

"My father, thou speakest well," cried Abdallah; "it is knowledge that I need,—not the knowledge of a heathen, but that of a true Mussulman, to whom faith opens the treasure of truth."

"Speak, my son," returned the old man; "perchance I can serve thee. Truth is like the pearl; he

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alone possesses it who has plunged into the depths of life and torn his hands on the rocks of time. What thou seekest I perhaps have found. Who knows whether I may not be able to give thee the light which thou enviest, and which is now valueless to my dim eyes?"

Won by such kindness, Abdallah poured out his soul before the dervish, who listened in silence. The confidence ended, the old man for his sole answer drew a lock of white wool from the mat on which he was sitting, and cast it to the wind; then, swaying his body like a drunken man, and fixing a strange gaze on Abdallah, he improvised the following lines,—

"Tulip with dark corolla, charming cypress,
Young man, with eyes more black and soft than night,
Seest thou yon white speck fluttering in the breeze?
Thus pass our days,—a dream that soon is told!
The desert rain less speedily dries up,
The falling rose less quickly fades away;
All cheats or fails us, and the noblest life
Is but the long sigh of a last adieu.
God alone is true; God alone is great; alone is God!
Wouldst thou, my child, that in the sacred book
Thy guardian angel should inscribe thy name?
Flee the intoxicating joys of sense.
God loves a heart unsullied by the world.
The body naught is but a sepulchre;
Happy the man who breaks its deadening bonds,
To plunge into the depths of boundless love!
To live in God is death; to die in God is life!"

"Thy words inflame my heart," said Abdallah; "but thou dost not answer me."

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"What, my son!" cried the mystic, "dost thou not understand me? The four-leaved shamrock does not exist on earth; thou must seek it elsewhere. The four-leaved shamrock is a symbol,—it is the impossible, the ineffable, the infinite! Wouldst thou possess it? I will reveal to thee the secret. Stifle thy senses; become blind, mute, and deaf; quit the city of existence; be like a traveler in the kingdom of nothingness; plunge into ecstatic rapture; and when nothing more causes your heart to beat, when you have encircled your brow with the glorious crown of death, then, my son, thou wilt find eternal love, and be swallowed up in it like a drop of water in the vast ocean. This is life! When nothing was yet in being, love existed; when nothing more remains, love will endure; it is the first and the last; it is God and man; it is the Creator and the creature; it is the height above, and the depth below; it is everything."

"Old man," said the Bedouin, affrighted, "age has weakened thy reason; thou dost not feel that thou art blaspheming. God alone existed before the world had being, God alone will remain when the heavens shall have crushed the earth in their fall. He is the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden; he knoweth all things, and is able to do all things."

The old man did not hear; he seemed in a dream; his lips moved, his eyes were fixed and sightless; a vision carried far from the earth this victim of the delusions of Satan. Abdallah returned mournfully to Hafiz and related to him this new disappointment.

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"My child," said the cripple, "flee these madmen who intoxicate themselves with visions like others with opium or hashish. They are idolators who worship themselves. Poor fools! does the eye create the light? does the mind of man create the truth? Woe to him who draws from his brain a world lighter and more hollow than a bubble; woe to him who sets man on the throne of God! As soon as he enters the city of dreams he is lost; God is effaced, faith evaporates, the will becomes lifeless, and the soul is stifled; it is the reign of darkness and death."





VIII

THE JEW



OUTH is the season of hope and desire. Despite his discomfiture, Abdallah did not tire of questioning the pilgrims whom he guided to Mecca, still relying on a happy chance; but Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, and India were mute,—no one had heard of the four-leaved shamrock. Hafiz condemned a curiosity which he thought guilty, while Halima consoled her son by making him believe that she still hoped with him.

One day, when Abdallah had retired to his tent more melancholy than usual, and was debating in his own mind whether he would not do well to quit his tribe and go to foreign lands in search of the talisman that evaded his grasp, a Jew entered the enclosure to ask hospitality. He was a little old man, dressed in rags, so thin that his girdle seemed to cut him in two. Leaning on a staff, he slowly dragged along his feet, wrapped in bloody rags, and he raised his head from time to time and looked around as if imploring pity. His wrinkled brow, his inflamed eyelids, his

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thin lips which scarcely covered his toothless gums, his disordered beard which fell to his waist, everything about him bespoke want and suffering. The stranger perceived Abdallah, and stretched out his trembling hand to him, murmuring in a weak voice, "O master of the tent, behold a guest of God!"

Wholly absorbed in his thoughts, the son of Yusuf heard nothing. The old man had already thrice repeated his prayer when unhappily he turned his head toward a neighboring tent, where a negress was nursing her child. At the sight of the Jew the woman hid her babe to preserve it from the evil eye, and rushing from her tent, cried, "Begone, thou wretch, worthy to be stoned! Hast thou come here to bring misfortune? May as many curses light on thee as there are hairs in thy beard!" And calling the dogs, she set them on the wretched man, who tried to flee; but his foot caught in his robe and he fell, uttering lamentable cries, too weak to drive off the enemies that were tearing him.

His shrieks roused Abdallah. To rush to the Jew, punish the dogs, and threaten the slave was the work of an instant. He picked up the Jew, took him in his arms, and carried him into the tent; a moment after he was washing his feet and hands, and binding up his wounds, while Halima brought him dates and milk.

"I bless thee, my son," said the old man in tears. "The blessing of the meanest of mankind is never contemptible in the sight of the Lord. May God

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remove far from thee jealousy, sadness, and pride, and grant thee wisdom, patience, and peace,—the gifts that he has promised to the generous of heart like thee!”

At evening, Hafiz, Abdallah, and the Jew talked long together round their frugal repast, although the cripple could not conceal his repugnance to the son of Israel. Abdallah, on the contrary, listened to the old man with interest, for the stranger was a great traveller, and told them of his journeyings. He was acquainted with Muscat, Hindostan, and Persia; he had visited the country of the Franks and crossed the deserts of Africa; he had now come from Egypt through Soudan, and was returning to Jerusalem by the way of Syria.

“But the object of my search is not wealth, my dear host,” said the Jew; “more than once have I seen it on the roadside and passed it by. Poverty befits the children of Abraham, say our sages, as do scarlet trappings the snow-white steed. What I have pursued for half a century over deserts and seas, through fatigue and misery, is the Word of God, the sacred tradition. That unwritten word, which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, was confided by Moses to the keeping of Joshua; Joshua transmitted it to the seventy elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the synagogue. After the destruction of Jerusalem, our masters collected it in the Talmud, but how far were they from possessing it entire! To punish the sins of our fathers, God broke asunder the

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truth, and scattered the fragments to the four winds of heaven. Happy is he who can gather together these dispersed shreds,—happy is he who can discover a ray of the divine splendor! The children of the age may despise and hate him; their insults are to his soul like the rain to the earth,—in bursting it asunder, they purify and refresh it.”

“And are you this man, my father?” said Abdallah, so deeply moved by the words of his guest that he quite forgot that he was talking with an infidel. “Have you discovered this treasure? Do you possess the whole truth?”

“I am but a worm of the earth,” replied the Jew; “but from my childhood up I have questioned the masters, and entreated them to repeat to me the secrets of the law; I have sought in the Cabala for the wealth that is thought valueless in the marts of the world, and I have endeavored to decipher that language of numbers which is the key to all truth. How far I have succeeded God alone can judge; to him be the praise! One thing is certain,—namely, that the angel Razriel initiated Adam into the mysteries of the creation; and who dare say that this revelation is lost? If there lives a man who has lifted a corner of the veil, he has nothing more to hope or fear on earth; he has had his day, and is ready for death.”

“My father,” inquired the young Bedouin trembling, “has your science told you of a sacred plant which at once bestows virtue and happiness?”

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"Certainly," replied the old man, smiling; "it is treated of in the Zohar, with many other marvels."

"It is the four-leaved shamrock, is it not?"

"Perchance," returned the Jew, with a frown; "but how did this name reach your ears?"

When the son of Yusuf had finished his story, the old man gazed at him tenderly. "My son," said he, "the poor often repay hospitality better than the rich, for God himself holds the purse-strings. The secret which thou art seeking I long ago discovered in the recesses of Persia; and since God has led my steps to thy tent, it is doubtless because he has chosen me to bring thee the truth. Listen, and let what I am about to tell thee be engraven on thy heart."

Hafiz and Abdallah drew near the old man, who related the following tale in a low and mysterious voice,—

"You know that when God drove our first father Adam from Paradise, he permitted him to carry with him the date-tree to serve as his nourishment, and the camel, which was molded of the same clay as himself, and which could not exist without him."

"That is true," exclaimed the cripple. "When my young camels come into the world, they would die of hunger if I did not hold their heads to their mothers' udders; the camel is made for us, as we are for the camel."

"When the flaming sword drove the first criminals before it, Adam cast a look of despair at the abode which he was forced to forsake, and, to carry with

him a last memento, broke off a branch of myrtle. The angel let him alone; he remembered that by God's command he had formerly worshipped the mortal whom now he pitied."

"True!" said Hafiz. "It was the same branch of myrtle that Shoaib long after gave to his son-in-law Moses; it was the staff with which the prophet tended his flocks, and with which he afterward wrought his miracles in Egypt."

"Eve also paused in tears before those flowers and trees which she had loved so well; but the sword was pitiless, and she was forced to proceed. Just as she was about to go out, she hastily snatched one of the plants of Paradise. The angel shut his eyes as he had done with Adam. What the plant was Eve knew not; she had clutched it in her flight, and had instantly closed her hand. She would have been wise had she carried it away in the same manner; but curiosity once more prevailed over prudence, and before crossing the fatal threshold, our mother opened her hand to see what she had gathered. It was the four-leaved shamrock, the most brilliant of all the flowers of Paradise. One leaf was red like copper, another white like silver, the third yellow like gold, and the fourth glittering like diamond. Eve paused to look at her treasure, when the fiery sword touched her; she started, her hand trembled, and the diamond leaf fell within the gates of Paradise, while the other three leaves, swept away by the wind, were scattered over the earth; where they fell God alone knows."

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"What!" exclaimed the young man, "have they never since been seen?"

"Not that I know of; and it is even possible that the story is only an allegory, concealing some profound truth."

"No, no," said Abdallah, "that is not so. Try to remember, my father; perchance you will recall something more. I must have this plant at any price; I wish it, and with God's aid I will have it."

The old man buried his face in his hands, and long remained absorbed in contemplation. Abdallah and Hafiz scarcely dared breathe for fear of disturbing his reverie. "My efforts are in vain; I can recall nothing to memory," said he, at last; "perhaps my book will give me some information." He took from his girdle a yellow manuscript volume, with a black, greasy cover, turned the pages slowly, carefully examined the squares, circles, and alphabets mixed with figures, beginning some with *aleph* and others with *thau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. "Here are four lines which are repeated in Soudan, and which may interest you," said he, at last, "but their meaning escapes me,—

"There is a mysterious herb
That grows hidden from human eyes;
Seek it not upon earth,
'Twill be found above in the skies'

"Patience, patience," he added, seeing Abdallah's emotion, "the words have more than one meaning; the ignorant seek to fish up truth from the surface,

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the wise pursue it to the remotest depths, where they attain it, thanks to the most powerful of instruments, the sacred decade of the Sepiroth. Do you not remember the saying of one of our masters, the Rabbi Halaphta, the son of Dozza?

“Seek not heaven in yonder azure depths,
Where glows the burning sun and pales the moon;
For heaven, my son, lies hid in thine own soul,
And paradise is naught but a pure heart.”

Yes,” he continued, raising his voice, “I discern a light that guides me. Since God has permitted us to meet, he has doubtless decreed that you shall find what you desire; but beware of outstripping his will by a vain and guilty curiosity. Follow his law, execute his commands, create a heaven in your soul, and some day, perchance, when you least expect it, you will find the desired reward. This, at least, is all that my science can tell you.”

“Well spoken, old man,” said Hafiz, laying his hand on Abdallah’s shoulder. “Nephew,” he added, “God is master of the hour; wait and obey.”





IX

THE WELL OF ZOBEYDE



HE night was a sweet one to Abdallah. He saw the mysterious plant more than once in his dreams, and as soon as he awakened, he sought to retain the friend who had given him hope; but the Jew obstinately refused his entreaty. "No, my son," said he, "one night in thy tent is enough. The first day a man is a guest, the second a burden, the third a pest. Thou hast nothing more to tell me, and I have nothing more to teach thee; it is time for us to part. Let me thank thee once more, and pray God in thy behalf. If we have no longer the same keblah,¹ at least we are both the children of Abraham, and both worship the same God."

The only favor that Abdallah could obtain was for the Jew to mount a camel, and permit his two friends to accompany him a day's journey on his way. Hafiz had taken a fancy to the stranger, and Abdallah hoped

¹ The point of the horizon toward which men turn their faces in prayer; the Mohammedans turn toward Mecca, the Jews toward Jerusalem.

to gain some new light on the subject nearest his heart; but the sight of the desert awakened new ideas in the old man's mind, and he thought no more of the stories of the past night.

"If I am not mistaken," said he to Hafiz, "we shall find on our way the well dug in olden times by the Sultan Zobeyde in his pilgrimage to Mecca."

"Yes," replied the cripple, "it is Haroun Al-Raschid's monument in our country. To the calif and his pious wife we owe our finest gardens."

"A glorious monument," exclaimed the Jew, "and one that will endure when what men call glory—that is, blood uselessly shed and money foolishly spent—shall be forgotten."

"Spoken like one of the children of Israel," rejoined Hafiz. "You are a shop-keeping people. A Bedouin reasons in a different fashion. War to him is the best thing of all that earth affords. He who has not looked death in the face knows not whether he is a man. It is noble to strike with the front to the foe; it is glorious to overthrow an enemy and avenge those we love. Are you not of the same mind, my nephew?"

"You are right, my uncle; but battle is not pleasure without alloy. I remember the time, when, closely pressed by a Bedouin who held a pistol to my head, I plunged my sword into his breast. He fell; my joy was extreme, but it was of short duration. As I looked on his dim eyes, and his lips covered with the foam of death, I thought in spite of myself that he had a mother who, however proud she might be of having

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given birth to a brave man, must thenceforth remain lonely and desolate, as my mother would have been had her son been killed instead. And this man was a Mussulman,—that is, a brother! Perhaps you are right,” added the young man, turning to the Jew. “War doubtless is noble; but to fight the desert, like the calif, and force the wilderness to give way before fertility and abundance,—this is great indeed! Happy they who lived in the days of Zobeyde the Good!”

“Why not imitate those you admire?” asked the old man, in a low tone, as if wishing to be heard by Abdallah alone.

“Explain yourself,” said the Bedouin; “I do not understand you.”

“Nor I either,” said the cripple.

“It is because the eyes of youth are not yet open, and those of old age are blinded by habit. Why is this clump of acacias in this spot, when all around is barren? Why do these sheep browse on grass which is almost green here when the sands of the desert have dominion everywhere else? Why do these birds flutter in and out among the sheep, and pick up the still sprouting earth with their beaks? You see this daily, and because you see it daily you do not reflect on it. Men are made thus; they would admire the sun did it not return every morning.”

“You are right,” said Abdallah, thoughtfully,—“there is water in this spot; perhaps one of the wells formerly dug by the calif.”

“How can you be certain?” asked Hafiz.

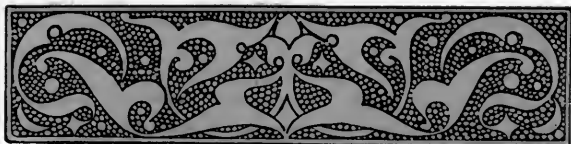
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"You would not ask the question," returned the Jew, "if, like me, you had grown old on the Talmud. Hearken to the words of one of our masters, and know that all knowledge is contained in our law. 'The words of the law before the coming of Solomon were like unto a well, whose cool water lies far below the surface of the earth, so that none can drink thereof. Seeing this, the wise man fastens one rope to another and one thread to another, then draws and drinks. It was thus that Solomon passed from allegory to allegory, and from speech to speech, till he had fathomed the words of the law.'"

"Whoever finds this spring will find a treasure," said the shepherd. "Stay with us stranger, and we will seek it together: you shall aid us with your science, and we will share with you."

"No," replied the Jew. "He who weds Science weds poverty. I have lived too happily for half a century with Study to be divorced from her now. Wealth is an imperious mistress; she requires the whole heart and life of man. Leave her to the young."

The sun was going down on the horizon. The old man dismounted from his camel and thanked his two companions, whom he tenderly embraced, insisting that they should go no farther. "Be not concerned about me," he said; "he has nothing to fear who has poverty for his baggage, old age for his escort, and God for his companion." And waving his hand for the last time, he resolutely plunged into the desert.



X

THE COPPER LEAF



It was not a difficult matter to purchase the spot of ground where the piercing eye of the pilgrim had divined a spring; a few feddans¹ of half-barren sand are of little value in the desert, and twenty douros that Halima had formerly received from Mansour, and had kept carefully in an old vase, sufficed to crown Abdallah's wishes. Hafiz, who was always prudent, gave out that he intended to build there a shelter for his flock, and immediately set to work to bring sufficient boughs thither to conceal from all eyes the mysterious work about to be undertaken.

Wherever there are women and children there are curiosity and gossip. It was soon a common rumor among the tribe that Hafiz and his nephew passed the nights in digging for treasure; and when, at night-fall, as the shepherds led their flocks to water, they spied the two friends covered with sand, they did not spare their taunts and jeers. "What is that," they

¹ The feddan is a little less than our acre.

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asked,—“jackals hiding in their den, dervishes hollowing out their cell, or old men building their tomb?” “No,” was the answer, “magicians digging a path to the bottomless pit.” “Let them be patient,” cried others; “they will find their way there only too soon.” And the laughter and ridicule went on; no bit has yet been found to curb the mouth of the envious and ignorant.

Abdallah and his uncle continued to dig with ardor for more than a month, with but little progress; the sand caved in, and the night destroyed the labor of the day. Halima was the first to lose patience. She accused her brother of having yielded too easily to the folly of a child. By degrees Hafiz grew discouraged, acknowledged the justice of his sister's reproaches, and abandoned the undertaking. “God has punished me for my weakness,” said he. “It was a great mistake to listen to the wretched impostor who amused himself with our credulity. Could anything else have been expected from those eternal foes of the Prophet and the truth?”

Abdallah, left alone, did not suffer himself to be cast down by misfortune. “God is my witness,” he repeated, “that I am laboring for my people, and not for myself alone. If I fail, what matters my pains? if I succeed, what matters the time?” He passed another month propping the inside of the well with wood, and having secured his work, began to dig anew.

On the fifteenth day of the third month, Hafiz, urged by Halima, determined to make a last effort

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with that headstrong nephew who continued to cherish a foolish hope after his uncle had set him the example of wisdom and resignation. To preach to Abdallah was not an easy task; the well was already thirty cubits deep, and the workman was at the bottom. Hafiz threw himself on the ground and, putting his mouth to the edge of the hole, shouted, "You headstrong child, more stubborn than a mule, have you sworn to bury yourself in this accursed well?"

"Since you are there, uncle," answered Abdallah, in a voice which seemed to come from the bottomless pit, "will you be kind enough to draw up the pannier and empty it, to save time?"

"Unhappy boy," cried Hafiz, in a tone more of anger than of pity, "have you forgotten the lessons which I gave you in your childhood? Have you so little respect for your mother and me that you persist in afflicting us? Have you forgotten the beautiful saying of the Koran, 'Whoso is preserved from the covetousness of his own soul, he shall surely prosper'? Do you think —"

"Father! father!" cried Abdallah, "I feel moisture; the water is coming; I hear it. Help! draw up the pannier, or I am lost."

Hafiz sprang to the rope, and well it was for him that he did so, for, despite all his haste, he brought up his nephew covered with mud, senseless, and half drowned. The water was rushing and boiling up in the well. Abdallah soon came to himself, and listened with delight to the rushing of the water; his heart

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beat violently, and Hafiz's eyes filled with tears. Suddenly the noise ceased. Hafiz lighted a handful of dry grass and threw it into the well, and, less than ten paces from the surface, he saw the water smooth and glittering as steel. To lower a jug and draw it up again was the work of an instant. The water was sweet. Abdallah fell on his knees and bowed his head to the earth. His uncle followed his example, then rose, embraced his nephew, and entreated his pardon.

Within an hour, despite the heat of the day, the two Bedouins had fixed a windlass by the side of the spring, furnished with earthen buckets and turned by two oxen, and the groaning sakiah poured the water upon the yellow grass, and restored to the earth the freshness of spring.

At nightfall, instead of going to the watering-place, the shepherds stopped with their flocks at the spring, and the scoffers of the night before glorified Abdallah. "We foresaw it," said the elders. "Happy the mother of such a son!" exclaimed the matrons. "Happy the wife of such a brave and handsome youth!" thought the maidens. And all added, "Blessed be the servant of God and his children's children!"

When the tribe was assembled together, the son of Yusuf filled a jug with water as cool as that of the well of Zemzem,¹ and, resting it on his arm, offered it first to his mother, and then to each of the others

¹ A sacred well within the walls of the temple at Mecca; the same, according to tradition, which gushed forth in the desert at the command of the angel to quench the thirst of Hagar and Ishmael.

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in turn. He himself was the last to drink. As he lifted the vessel to drain it to the bottom he felt something cold strike his lips. It was a bit of metal that had been swept along by the spring.

"What is this, my uncle?" asked he of Hafiz. "Does copper thus lie hidden in the bowels of the earth?"

"Oh, my son, preserve it; it is the choicest of treasures," cried the old man. "God has sent you the reward of your courage and labor. Do you not see that it is a shamrock leaf? The earth itself has opened to bring you from its depths this flower of Paradise. All that the honest son of Israel told us is true. Hope, my child, hope! Praise God the Only, the Incomparable, and the All-powerful! He alone is great!"





XI

THE GARDENS OF IREM



VERDANT gardens watered by living springs, boughs laden with fruit, palm-trees, pomegranates, eternal shade,—such is the paradise which the Book of Truth promises the faithful. Abdallah received a foretaste of this paradise on earth. His garden in a few years was the most beautiful spot imaginable,—a shady and peaceful retreat, the delight of the eye and heart. White clematis twined round the acacias and olive-trees, hedges of myrtle surrounded the dourah, barley, and melon-beds with perpetual verdure, and the cool water, flowing through numerous trenches, bathed the foot of the young orange-trees. Grapes, bananas, apricots, and pomegranates abounded in their season, and flowers blossomed all the year round. In this happy abode, where sadness never came, the rose, the jasmine, the mint, the gray-eyed narcissus, the worm-wood with its azure blossoms seemed to smile on the passer-by, and delighted him with their gentle fragrance when his eye was weary of admiring their

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beauty. What thicket escapes the piercing eye of the bird? These friends of the fruits and flowers hastened thither from every quarter of the horizon. One would have said that they knew the hand that fed them. In the morning, when Abdallah quitted his tent to spread the carpet of prayer on the dew-bespangled grass, the sparrows welcomed him with joyful cries, the turtle-doves cooed more tenderly than ever from under the broad fig-leaves, the bees alighted on his head, and the butterflies fluttered around him; flowers, birds, humming insects, and murmuring waters, all things living, seemed to render him thanks; all lifted up Abdallah's soul toward Him who had given him peace and plenty.

It was not for himself that the son of Yusuf had desired the wealth which he shared with his friends. He dug a deep basin at the bottom of the garden, into which the water flowed and remained cool during the summer droughts. The birds, fluttering about it, attracted the caravans from afar. "What water is that?" said the camel-drivers. "During all the years that we have travelled over the desert we have never seen this cistern. Have we mistaken our road? We filled our skins for seven days, and here we find water on the third day's march. Are these the gardens of Irem¹ which we are permitted to behold? Has God

¹ Sheddad, the King of Ad, having heard of Paradise and its delights, undertook to build a palace and garden which should rival it in magnificence. A terrible voice from heaven destroyed this monument of pride, or rather, rendered it invisible, for a certain Ibn Kela-bah pretended to have seen it during the reign of the Calif Moya-wiah. The gardens of Irem are celebrated among the Arabs.

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forgiven the presumptuous monarch who undertook to create a paradise in the midst of the desert?"

"No," answered Halima, "these are not the gardens of Irem. What you behold is the work of labor and prayer. God has blessed my son Abdallah." And the well was called the Well of the Benediction.





XII

THE TWO BROTHERS



THREE things are the delight of the eye, says the proverb,—running water, verdure, and beauty. Halima felt what was lacking in this well-watered and verdant garden. Again and again she repeated to her son that a man should not suffer his father's name to perish, but Abdallah turned a deaf ear to her. He had no thought of marriage; his mind was elsewhere. He looked continually at the tiny copper leaf, and continually asked himself by what deed of valor or goodness he could please God and obtain the only boon that he desired. Man's heart has not room for two passions at the same time.

One evening, when old Hafiz had visited his sister, and was using all his eloquence to persuade this wild colt to submit to the bridle, a gun fired at a distance announced the arrival of a caravan. Abdallah rose instantly to meet the strangers, leaving Halima in despair and poor Hafiz confounded. He soon returned, bringing with him a man still in his youth, but already

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fat and corpulent. The stranger bowed to Hafiz and Halima, gazed at them earnestly, then, fixing his small eyes on the Bedouin, "Is not this the tribe of the Beni Amurs," he asked, "and am I not in the tent of Abdallah, the son of Yusuf?"

"It is Abdallah that has the honor of welcoming you," answered the young man; "all that is here belongs to your lordship."

"What!" cried the new-comer, "have ten years' absence so changed me that I am a stranger in this dwelling? Has Abdallah forgotten his brother? Has my mother but one son?"

The meeting was a joyful one after so long a separation. Abdallah embraced Omar again and again, and Halima kissed first one and then the other, while Hafiz whispered to himself that man is a wicked animal. To suspect the son of Mansour of ingratitude was a crime, but how often had this crime been committed by the old shepherd.

The repast finished and the pipes brought, Omar took up the conversation. "How delighted I am to see you!" said he, tenderly clasping his brother's hand; "and the more so that I come to do you a service."

"Speak, brother!" said the son of Yusuf. "Having nothing to hope or fear except from God, I know not what service you can render me; but danger often draws near us without our knowledge, and nothing is quicker than the eye of a friend."

"It is not danger, but fortune that is in question," returned the son of Mansour. "Behold what brought

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me hither. I come from Taif, whither I had been summoned by the grand sherif. 'Omar,' said he to me, 'I know you to be the richest and most prudent merchant of Djiddah; you are known throughout the desert, where there is not a tribe that does not respect your name, or is not ready, at the sight of your signet, to furnish camels to transport your merchandise, or brave men to defend it. For this reason, I have conceived a high esteem for you, and it is to give you a proof of it that I have summoned you hither.'

"I bowed respectfully and awaited the pleasure of the sherif, who stroked his beard a long time before proceeding. 'The Pacha of Egypt,' said he at last, in a hesitating manner, 'the Pacha of Egypt, who prizes my friendship as I prize his, has sent me a slave who will be the gem of my harem, and whom, through respect for the hand that chose her, I can receive only as a wife. The pacha does me an honor which I accept with gratitude, though I am old, and at my age, having already a wife whom I love, it would have been wiser not to risk the peace of my household. But this slave has not yet arrived, and it is to conduct her hither that I need your prudence and skill. She can not land in Djiddah, which is under Turkish rule, and must therefore go to Yambo, in my dominions. The way is long from Yambo to Taif, and the wandering hordes and haughty tribes of the desert do not always respect my name. It does not suit me to make war on them at present, neither is it fitting that I should expose myself to insult. I am in

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need, therefore, of a wise and sagacious man to go to Yambo for me as if on his own behalf. You can easily make the journey, and no one will be surprised at it. What is more natural than that you should go to meet a valuable cargo, and who would attack you, a simple merchant, in a country where you have so many friends and resources?’

“Thus spoke the sherif. I sought to decline the dangerous favor, but was met with a terrible look. The displeasure of a prince is like the roar of a lion; to incense him is to rush into his jaws. I resigned myself to what I could not help. ‘Commander of the Faithful,’ I replied, ‘it is true that God has blessed my efforts, and that I have a few friends in the desert. It is for thee to command; speak, and I obey.’”

“That is well,” said Abdallah; “there is peril to brave and glory to win.”

“It is for this reason that I have come to thee,” resumed the son of Mansour. “With whom should I share this noble enterprise if not with thee, my brother, the bravest of the brave; if not with the wise and prudent Hafiz; if not with the bold comrades? The Bedouins on the road have never seen me—they only know my name; and, besides, instead of defending my caravan, they might plunder it, as they have done more than once; but if thou art there with thy followers, they will think twice before attacking it. To thee, therefore, it belongs to conduct the affair,—to thee will revert all the honor thereof. Thou seest that I speak with perfect frankness. As for me,

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I am only a merchant; thou art a man of thought and action. It is said in the desert that I am rich and fond of money,—a reputation which is a peril rather than an aid; thou, on the contrary, art respected and dreaded. The name of the son of Yusuf is a power; his presence is worth an army. Without thee I can do nothing; with thee I am sure of succeeding in an adventure in which my head is at stake. Am I wrong in relying on thee?"

"No," said Abdallah; "we are links of one chain; woe to him who breaks it! We will set out to-morrow, and, happen what may, thou shalt find me by thy side. A brother is born for evil days."





XIII

THE CARAVAN

THE same evening everything was in readiness for departure,—the skin filled, the provisions prepared, the bundles of hay counted, and the harness examined. Abdallah chose the surest camels and the most experienced drivers. Nor was this all: he engaged twelve young men, brave companions of tried courage who laughed at fatigue and war. Who would not have been proud of following the son of Yusuf? His glance commanded respect, his words went to the heart. With sabre always drawn and hand always open, he was the boldest of leaders and the tenderest of friends. Beside him men were as tranquil as the hawk in the cloud, or death in the tomb. On his part, Hafiz passed a sleepless night. To clean the guns, try the powder, run the bullets, and sharpen the sabres and daggers, was work to his taste, a pleasure that he yielded to no one.

As soon as the stars began to pale, the caravan set out on its way, with Abdallah at the head by the side

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of Omar, and Hafiz in the rear, watching everything, and throwing out timely words of fault-finding or praise. The camels walked slowly in single file, accompanied by their leaders chanting the songs of the desert. In the midst of the band proudly marched a magnificent dromedary, with a slender head, of the Oman breed, covered with gold, silver and shining plumes, and bearing a litter hung with velvet and brocade,—the equipage of the new favorite. The silver-pommelled saddles, Damascus blades, and black burnoose embroidered with gold, of twelve riders mounted on fine horses, glittered in the first beams of the sun.

Next came Abdallah's mare, led by a servant. Nothing could be imagined more beautiful than this mare, the glory of the tribe, and the despair and envy of all the Bedouins. She was called Hamama, the Dove, because she was as snowy, gentle and fleet as this queen of the forests.

Abdallah, dressed like a simple camel-driver, and armed with a long iron-headed staff, walked on foot by the side of Omar, who was seated tranquilly on his mule. They were among friends, and had nothing to fear, so that the brothers could talk at length of the past. When the sun darted its vertical rays on their heads, and the scorching air enervated man and beast, the son of Yusuf took his place by the side of the first camel-driver, and in a grave and solemn voice chanted one of those hymns of the desert which beguile the lonely way, to the praise of God.

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God alone is great!

Who maketh the earth to tremble?

Who launcheth the thunderbolt through the burning air?

Who giveth the sands to the fury of the simoom?

Who causeth the torrent to gush forth from its arid bed?

His name? hearest thou it not in the whirlwind?

God alone is great!

God alone is great!

Who calleth the storm from the depths of the sea?

Who causeth the rain and clouds to give way before the sun?

Who forceth the hungry wave to lick the strand?

His name? the wind murmureth it in its flight to the dying
wave:

God alone is great!

Oh, the power of the divine name! At the sound of these praises the very brutes forgot their fatigue and marched with a firm tread; the camel-drivers raised their heads; all refreshed themselves with these words as a running brook. It is the strength of the soul that gives energy to the body, and for the soul there is no strength but in God.

Thus passed the first day. The next day some precautions were taken; Hafiz went in advance as a scout; they set out as soon as the moon had risen, marched in silence, and stopped earlier than the day before, but saw no one. The succeeding days also passed quietly, and on the evening of the nine days' march they saw at last the walls and towers of Yambo.



XIV

CAFOUR



THE caravan made a short stay in the city; the brig that brought the slave had arrived the night before, and Omar was in haste to return in peace to Djiddah. The camels rested; they took the way to the desert. They received the sultana at the water's edge. A flat-boat put off from the ship with two women wrapped in habarahs, or large mantles of black taffeta, and their faces shrouded, all but the eyes, in bourkos, or white muslin veils that fell to the feet. Omar received the strangers with a respectful bow, and led them to the equipage that awaited them. The dromedary knelt down at the voice of Abdallah. One of the women slowly mounted the palanquin and seated herself, gracefully drawing the folds of her robe about her; the other approached with equal gravity, but suddenly snatching off her mantle and veil, she threw them over Omar's head, twisting the muslin around his face, and almost smothering him; then, putting one foot on the camel's neck, she leaped on his back

like a cat, grimacing like an ape at the astonished Bedouins, and shouting with laughter.

"Cafour, you shall be whipped," cried the veiled lady, who had much ado to preserve her gravity; but Cafour did not believe her mistress's threats, and continued to laugh and grimace at Omar as soon as his head emerged from the coverings. The son of Mansour at last threw off the heap of silk under which he had been buried, and raised his head angrily toward the creature that had insulted him; but what was his astonishment to see a smile on the faces of the grave Bedouins and Abdallah himself. All shrugged their shoulders as they pointed to his enemy. He looked, and saw a little negro girl of surpassing ugliness. A round flat face, with small eyes, the whites of which were scarcely visible, a flat nose sunken below the cheeks, wide nostrils from which hung a silver ring that fell below the mouth, enormous lips, teeth as white as those of a young dog, and a chin tattooed blue,—such was the charming face of the damsel. To add to her ugliness, she was loaded with jewels like an idol. On the crown of her head was a plume of parrot's feathers. The thick wool that covered her head was parted in little tresses ornamented with sequins; her ears were pierced like a sieve, and hung with rings of every shape and size; a broad necklace of blue enamel encircled her neck, and her arm was covered from the wrist to the elbow with seven or eight bracelets of coral, amber, and filigree work; lastly, she wore on each ankle a prodigious silver band.

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Such was Cafour, the delight of her mistress, the beautiful Leila.

Full license is given fools, the favorites of God, whose soul is in heaven while their body drags on the earth. The whole caravan, therefore, except Omar, who still bore her a grudge, took a liking to the poor negress. It was but too evident that she had not her reason; she talked and laughed continually; her tongue spared nobody, and her judgments were insane. For instance, she gazed long at the son of Mansour, who, half reclining on his mule, marched by the side of the litter, surrounded by his slaves, slowly smoking Persian tobacco in his jasmine pipe. One of the servants having filled the pipe too full, he dealt him a box on the ear. "Mistress," cried Cafour, "do you see that old man buried in a cushion, with his feet in slippers? He is a Jew, mistress; beware of him; he would beat us for a douro, and sell us for a sequin." Leila laughed, while Omar flew into a passion and threatened the negress. To style a man who counted his piastres by millions an old man and a Jew was indeed the act of an idiot. What person in his right mind would have dared to talk thus? It was soon the turn of Abdallah, who was reviewing the caravan. He had put on his war-dress, and every one admired the grace of the young chief. His white burnoose floated in long folds; his Damascus pistols and silver-hilted cangiar glittered in his belt; and a red and yellow silk turban overshadowed his eyes, and added to the fierceness of his glance. How beautiful he

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was! All hearts went out toward him, and his very mare seemed proud of carrying such a master. Hamama tossed her serpentine head and reed-like ears; her dilated nostrils breathed forth fire; on seeing her start, vault, stop short, and bound forward, it seemed as if she and her rider were but one. As the son of Yusuf paused near the litter, a camel-driver could not help saying to Cafour, "Look, child; do you see such beauty among your coarse Egyptians or in your Maghreb?"

"Look, mistress," cried the negress, leaning over the camel's neck; "see these fine clothes, elegant air, tapering fingers, and cast-down eyes! Pretty bird, why don't you look at us?" said she to Abdallah. "Oh, I know; it is a woman in disguise,—the virgin of the tribe. Driver, tell him to come up here; he belongs here with us."

"Silence, infidel!" exclaimed Abdallah, losing his patience. "Must you have a ring through your lips to stop your serpent's tongue?"

"It is a woman," said Cafour, laughing loudly; "a man does not avenge himself by insults. Come, women are made to love each other. You are handsome, and so am I, but my mistress is the handsomest of the three. Look!"

The eye is quicker than the thought. Abdallah raised his eyes to the litter. Cafour playfully laid hold of her mistress's veil; the frightened Leila drew back; the string broke; and the bourko fell. Leila uttered a cry and covered her face with one hand,

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while with the other she boxed the ears of the negress, who began to cry. The whole passed like a flash of lightning.

"How beautiful she is!" thought the son of Mansour. "I must have her."

"Glory to Him who created her, and created her so perfect!" murmured the son of Yusuf.

Who can tell the pain and pleasure that a moment can contain? Who can tell how this fleeting vision entered and filled Abdallah's soul? The caravan went on, but the Bedouin remained motionless. Leila had hidden herself in her veil, yet a woman stood smiling before the son of Yusuf. He closed his eyes, yet, despite himself, he saw a brow as white as ivory, cheeks as blooming as the tulip, and tresses blacker than ebony falling on a gazelle-like neck, like the date branch laden with golden fruit. A pair of lips like a thread of scarlet parted to call him; a pair of large eyes gazed at him,—eyes surrounded with a bluish ring, and sparkling with a lustre softer than that of the violet moist with dew. Abdallah felt his heart escaping him; he buried his face in his hands and burst into tears.

The caravan continued its march, and old Hafiz soon found himself by the side of his nephew. Astonished at the silence and inaction of the young chief, he approached him, and touching his arm, "Something new has happened, has there not?" he asked.

Abdallah started and recovering himself like a man aroused from a dream, "Yes, my father," he answered in a dejected tone.

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"The enemy is at hand!" cried Hafiz, with sparkling eyes; "you have seen him! Glory to God, our guns are about to speak!"

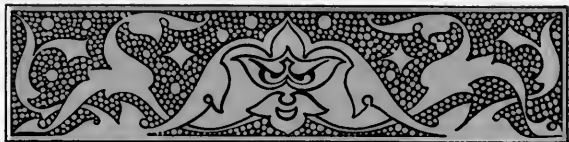
"No one threatens us; the danger is not there."

"What is the matter, then, my son!" said the old man, anxiously. "Are you sick? Have you a fever? You know that I am skilled in the art of healing."

"That is not it; at our first halt I will tell you all."

"You frighten me," said Hafiz; "if it is neither danger nor sickness that disturbs you, some evil passion must be troubling your soul! Take care, my son! With God's aid the foe is defeated, and with God's aid sickness is cured; there is but one enemy against which there is no defence, and that enemy is our own heart."





XV

THE SULTAN OF CANDAHAR



WHEN the caravan halted, Abdallah took his uncle aside. Hafiz seated himself on his carpet and began to smoke, without uttering a word. The young chief, wrapped in his cloak, stretched himself on the ground, and long remained motionless. Suddenly he started up, and kissing the old man's hand, "My uncle," said he, "I implore the protection of God. What God wills must come; there is no strength nor power but in him." And in an agitated voice, he related the vision which had troubled him.

"Oh, my son," said the shepherd, with a sigh, "thou art punished for not hearkening to our words. Happy is he who chooses a virtuous and obedient wife from among his tribe, with the sole desire of perpetuating the name of his father! Woe to him who suffers his soul to be taken in the snares of a strange woman! Can anything good come out of Egypt? All the women there, since Joseph's time, have been dissolute and treacherous,—worthy daughters of Zuleika!"¹

¹ The name given by the Arabs to Potiphar's wife.

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"Treachery had naught to do with it, my uncle; it was wholly the work of chance."

"Do not believe it, my nephew; there is no such thing as chance with these cunning fishers for men's hearts, who spread their nets everywhere."

"She loves me, then!" exclaimed the youth, starting up; "but no, my uncle, you are mistaken. In two days we shall be at Taif; in two days we shall be separated forever, yet I feel that I shall always love her!"

"Yes, you will love her, but she will forget you for the first jewel from the hand of her new master. Your heart serves her as a plaything; when the whim of the moment has passed, she will break it without remorse. Have you forgotten what the Koran says of that imperfect and capricious being who is brought up among ornaments and jewels? 'The reason of women is folly, and their religion love. Like the flowers, they are the delight of the eyes and the joy of the senses, but they are poisoned blossoms. Woe to him who draws near them! he will soon have a winding-sheet for his raiment!' Believe in my experience; I have seen more families destroyed by women than by war. The more generous a man is, the greater is his danger. Do you not know the story of the Sultan of Candahar, who was a true believer, though he lived in the days of ignorance before the coming of Mohammed, and a sage, though he sat on a throne. He undertook to gather together all the maxims of human prudence, in order to leave to his children an inherit-

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ance worthy of him. With this end, the philosophers of the Indies had written a library, which the sultan took with him everywhere, and which ten camels scarce sufficed to carry. 'Reduce all this science to first principles,' said he. It was done, and but a camel's load remained. This was still too much. A number of aged Brahmins, chosen by the king, reduced this abridgment of long experience first to ten volumes, then to five, and then to a single one, which was offered to the sultan in a box of velvet and gold. The prince had reigned long, and life had few secrets from him. He took the book, and began to blot out all that was self-evident and therefore unnecessary. 'What is the danger that threatens my sons?' thought he. 'Not avarice, for that is the malady of the old; nor ambition, for that is the virtue of princes. I will strike out all this.' But at last he came to a more violent passion. He was so forcibly struck by the truth of an adage that he threw the book into the fire, and bequeathed this maxim alone to his children, calling it the key to the treasure of life: 'All women are false,—above all, the one that loves thee!' Such was the adage. Wouldst thou, my son, be more prudent than this infidel, more enlightened than Solomon, or wiser than the Prophet? No; believe me, the beauty of woman is like the scabbard of the sabre,—a glittering covering that hides death. Do not go to meet thy destruction. Think of God, preserve thyself for thy old and true friends, and if more is needed to move thee, have pity on thy mother and old Hafiz."

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"Thou art right," said Abdallah, sadly, as he stretched himself on the ground, with his burnoose for a pillow. For the first time he did not believe his uncle's words; for the first time, too, the four-leaved shamrock was forgotten.





XVI

THE ATTACK



NIGHT is an antidote to fatigue and a poison to sorrow. The son of Yusuf rose with a mind more diseased than the night before. Struck with incurable madness, he no longer felt himself the master of his will or his movements; it was the delirium of fever, the dejection of despair. Despite himself, the fatal litter attracted him; he hastened to it, then turned and fled, pursued by those terrible yet charming eyes. If he saw from afar a horseman approaching the palanquin; if the son of Mansour turned toward the two women, —he spurred on his horse as if about to attack an enemy, then suddenly paused, daring neither to draw back nor advance. The whole morning he tortured his horse. Panting and covered with foam, Hamama bounded forward under the spur which tore her sides, astonished at not understanding her master and sharing his madness.

The shepherd cast withering glances toward the litter. Leila had thrown herself back in the corner,

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and covered her head with her veil, and no one was to be seen but Cafour, spiritless and mute as a wet bird. More tranquil in this respect, Hafiz turned to look for his nephew, and saw him wandering at random in the desert. Everything around him betrayed a diseased mind. Hafiz spurred his horse toward Abdallah. "Cheer up, my nephew!" he cried. "Courage! We are men in order to suffer; we are Mussulmans in order to submit to fate."

"I am stifling," answered the youth; "I am conquered by the malady that is preying upon me. Anything, anything, my uncle, rather than what I suffer! Let danger come; let the enemy draw near! I wish to fight and to die!"

"Mad wishes and guilty words," replied the old man, sternly. "God is the master of life and death. Beware lest he grant thy prayer; it is sufficient punishment that God should give us what we ask him in our folly. What is that?" he added, leaping from his horse, and carefully examining the ground. "These are the prints of horses' feet; there are no camels among them. An armed band has passed this way. The marks are fresh; the enemy is not far off. Do you not feel that your passion is destroying us? You, our leader, have noticed nothing; you are leading us to death."

The two companions looked about them, but saw nothing but the desert. They were passing through a desolate country. The road wound among prodigious blocks of reddish granite, strewn over the sands

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like crumbling ruins. The earth was full of gaping crevices, the beds of dried-up torrents and deep caves, — graves opened for the traveller. There was not a bird in the air, not a gazelle in the distance, not a black speck in the horizon; with a steel-like sky above their heads, and the silence of death around them, attacked there, their only hope was in their sabres and God.

Hafiz ran to the head of the caravan. Each one fell in line and was as silent as in a night-march; naught was to be heard but the crackling of the sand under the feet of the camels. After an hour's march—an hour which seemed interminable—they reached a hill which it was necessary to turn. Hafiz went in advance; he ascended the hill, and leaving his horse halfway from the top, crept on his belly among the rocks. After gazing long, he noiselessly descended, put his horse to the gallop, and reached Abdallah's side, his face as calm as at his departure. "There are white tents in the distance," said he. "They are not Bedouins, but Arnauts from Djiddah. They are numerous, and are awaiting us; we have been betrayed. No matter; we will sell our skin more dearly than they will care to buy it. Forward, my son, and do your duty!" And calling six of the bravest of the company, Hafiz loaded his gun and again took the way to the height.

Abdallah had just reached the head of the column when a white smoke appeared from a rock, a bullet whizzed through the air, and a camel fell. Great

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confusion instantly prevailed in the caravan; the camels fell back, rushing against and overthrowing each other; the drivers fled to the rear, and the horsemen rushed to the front. It seemed like a forest shaken by the wind. The moans of the camels and neighing of the horses mingled with the shouts of the men. In the disorder a handful of robbers, whose red vests, white drawers, and broad girdles easily showed them to be Arnauts, fell upon the litter and hurried it away with shouts of joy. It was in vain that Abdallah and his friends attempted to charge on them; the sharpshooters in ambush felled them on the way. Thrice Abdallah spurred his horse against his invisible foe; thrice he was forced to return, his comrades falling around him.

Abdallah trembled with rage; by his side, and not less excited, was Omar, rending his clothes,—Omar, whose passion made him forget all prudence, and who thought of nothing but the treasure that was snatched from him. "Forward, my brother!" he cried. Both were reining up their horses for a last effort, when several musket-shots followed each other rapidly. The Arnauts had forgotten old Hafiz, who suddenly came upon them from above, and shot them down without pity.

The road clear, the brothers rushed forward, followed by Hafiz. "Gently, my son!" cried he to Abdallah. "Spare your horse; we have time."

"Where is Leila, my uncle? They are carrying her off; she is lost."

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"Old fool," said Omar, "do you think that these robbers will wait for us? Twenty dours to him who brings down the dromedary!"

One of the Bedouins raised his gun, and taking aim, fired, at the risk of killing the two women. The shot struck the shoulder of the animal, which fell with his precious burden.

"Well done, young man," said Hafiz, sarcastically, to the Bedouin. "The Arnauts will thank you; you have rid them of the only obstacle to their flight. Now the sultana is lost."

Hafiz had judged but too rightly. The robbers surrounded the litter and tore from it a woman wrapped in a mantle, in whom Abdallah recognized Leila; then, by the command of a magnificently dressed chief, a man took her behind him and set off at full gallop. At this sight the son of Yusuf darted upon the enemy like an eagle from the clouds. "Dog! son of a dog!" he cried, "show your face, if you are a man! Is it to fly the better that you have so fine a horse?" And he fired his pistol at him.

"Wait, son of a Jew!" said the captain, turning round; "my sabre is thirsting for your blood."

"Forward, children of powder!" cried old Hafiz. "Charge, my sons! death before disgrace! Charge! Bullets do not kill. What is to be, will be, according to God's will."

Abdallah and the Arnaut rushed upon each other at full speed. The captain advanced with a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other. Abdallah had

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nothing but a dagger, which he held in his hand as he leaned forward, almost concealed by the mare's neck. The Arnaut fired and missed. The horses met with a violent shock, and the riders engaged hand to hand. But Abdallah had the strength and rage of a lion; he seized his rival round the waist, shook him with a terrible grasp, and plunged his dagger into his breast. The blood spouted forth like wine from a pierced skin, and the Arnaut bounded up and reeled in his saddle. Abdallah snatched him from his horse and threw him on the ground as if to trample on him. "There is one that will drink no more," said Hafiz, leaping on the body to despoil it.

The fall of the captain, the swords of the Bedouins, who fell on the enemy like bees robbed of their honey, and the cries of the camel-drivers, who rushed thither with their guns, soon decided the day. The Arnaut troop disappeared amid dust and smoke, the bravest remaining in the rear and firing their pistols to protect a retreat which it was not dared to molest. The victory was dearly bought; more than one was wounded.

"Well, my brother," said Omar with flashing eyes, "shall we stand here while these robbers are carrying off our property?"

"Forward, my friends!" cried Abdallah. "One more effort! we must have the sultana."

"She is here, my lord; she is here!" answered several voices.

Abdallah turned abruptly and saw Leila, who had just been extricated from the litter, covered with dust

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and blood, with pale face and dishevelled hair, yet more beautiful than ever, despite this disorder. "Save me!" she cried, stretching out her arms, "save me! my only hope is in you."

"Who was it, then, that those knaves carried off?" asked Hafiz.

"It was Cafour," said Leila; "she had put on my mantle and wrapped me in her burnoose."

"Well played," said a Bedouin, laughing; "those sons of dogs have taken an ape for a woman."

"Let us begone quickly," cried Omar, feasting his eyes on Leila. "Let us begone; the day is ours. Come, madam, do not mourn for the slave," said he to Leila. "For two hundred doudous I can buy just such another at Djiddah, which I shall be happy to offer you."

"Let us go," echoed the camel-drivers; "the band is large, and will return to attack us during the night."

Hafiz looked at Abdallah. "What!" said the young man, moved with pity, "shall we leave the negress in the hands of these wretches?"

"What is written is written," replied Omar, who had lost all desire to fight. "Is it wise, my brother, to risk your life and that of these brave Mussulmans for a heathen whom we can replace in two days? We must go; we are expected at Taif. Are you about to quit us when we are in need of you?"

"Abdallah," said the young woman, raising her beautiful eyes to him, "do not abandon me!"

The son of Yusuf placed his hand on his heart, which he felt faltering. "No, no!" he exclaimed;

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"it shall not be said that a Bedouin forfeits his word. If a sack of coffee had been intrusted to me, I would not leave it in the hands of these robbers, and shall I abandon to them one of God's creatures? Are there any men here? Who will come with me?" There was silence, and one of the Beni Amurs stepped forth.

"There are six of us wounded, and the sultana is saved," said he. "We have kept our engagement."

"Come, my child," said Hafiz, ironically, "I see that we are the only two that have madness in our veins. Let us go. With God's aid we will recover the child."

"Adieu, my brother," said Abdallah, embracing Omar; "take good care of the stranger. If you do not see me in two days, tell the sherif that I have done my duty, and my mother not to weep for me." And without turning his head, the son of Yusuf took the way to the desert, accompanied by Hafiz, who unclasped his burnoose, and threw over his shoulders a camel-driver's cloak. "We need the skin of the fox instead of the lion," said he, laughing.

Omar followed them with his eyes, and when he saw them disappear, "If they do not return," thought he, "it will be no great matter. I shall make a better bargain with the sherif than with that youth. It is not easy to dazzle or deceive these madcaps who never reason. Hurrah for men that calculate! they are always to be bought, and through their wisdom we get them at half price."

As he went on, Abdallah heard behind him the shouts of the camel-drivers and the noise of the moving

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caravan. He was quitting all that he loved for a strange child. More than once he was inclined to look back, but he dared not brave his uncle, who, his eyes fixed upon him, seemed to read the depths of his heart. When the last sound died away in the distance, Abdallah paused in spite of himself. His horse turned round, snuffing the wind, and anxious to rejoin its friends. Hafiz laid his hand on the young man's shoulder. "My son," said he, "your road lies before you."





XVII

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AFTER an hour's march they came in sight of the Arnaut tents, until then hidden by a rising ground. The camp was in the midst of a small tract of brushwood, where the cattle had been turned out to browse. "Let us stop here," said Hafiz, approaching a rock illumined by the setting sun; "we have six hours before us."

The horses tethered, the old man set to work to pick up the dead branches and tie them in small bundles, with cartouches and cotton inside. When he had finished his task, he took from a bag a piece of dried meat and a handful of dates, and having eaten them, lighted his pipe, and began to smoke tranquilly. "Now, my nephew," said he, "I am going to sleep. Lovers do not need repose, but old men are not like lovers. Wake me when the Great Bear and her cubs are yonder in the horizon." A few moments after he was asleep, while Abdallah, his face buried in his hands, mused on her whom he had saved and was never more to behold.

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Hafiz awakened of his own accord just before the time appointed, and looked tenderly at his young companion. "Well, my child," said he, "you wished for danger that you might forget your folly, and God has granted your prayer. Have courage; two friends that cling together will come out safe from the fire."

On nearing the camp, the Bedouins glided among the briars and bushes. By creeping on their hands and knees between the horses' legs, they assured themselves that it was defenceless. No sentinels had been posted except at a distant point; all were asleep; the fires had gone out, and only one tent was lighted. They noiselessly crept toward it; being in the shade, they could see without being seen. "Listen," said Hafiz; "perhaps we shall learn what has become of the child."

Three men, better dressed than soldiers, were seated on carpets, smoking long pipes, around a table¹ on which coffee was served. A lamp in the middle dimly lighted their faces. All three were talking warmly.

"A bad day's work!" said one of the officers. "Who would have thought that the captain would have let himself be killed by a camel-driver!"

"My dear Hassan," answered the youngest of the party, "what is one man's misfortune is another's good luck. Since the captain is dead, the command belongs to us."

"Very well, my dear Mohammed," returned Hassan; "but which of us three shall be chief?"

¹ These tables, called *kursi*, are a species of benches from fifteen to eighteen inches high.

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"I will sell my chance," said the one who had not yet spoken, and who stood with his back to Abdallah. "It is said that the woman we have taken is a relative of the Pacha of Egypt. Give me the sultana, and I will return to Epirus to live at my ease. A graybeard like me cares little for a woman, but the sherif will think differently. To him the prisoner will be well worth five thousand douros."

"Done," said Hassan. "Kara Shitan, I surrender to you my share of the prize."

"But I do not," said Mohammed; "I am twenty-five, and do not sell women. The idea of marrying a sultana pleases me. I should not be sorry to be the pacha's cousin. My share of the command for the princess. I have time enough to become captain."

"We can arrange it," said the graybeard; "the sword to one, the woman to another, and the money to me."

"So be it," said Hassan. "I will give two thousand douros."

"But what will Mohammed give?"

"Mohammed will promise anything you like," replied the young man, laughing. "He who has nothing but hope in his purse does not stop to haggle."

"You have a black mare; I will take her."

"Old Jew," cried Mohammed, "dare to touch my mare, and I will break your head."

"Then you shall not have the sultana," returned the graybeard.

"Who will hinder me?"

"A man that fears you little," cried Kara Shitan;

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and going to the end of the tent, he touched the curtain that divided it in two. "The sultana is here; take her if you can," he said.

Mohammed drew his dagger. Hassan threw himself between the rivals, opposing prayers and counsels to threats and insults, without succeeding in imposing silence on the opponents.

"We have them," whispered Hafiz in Abdallah's ear. "I am going to draw them from the tent. Take the child, go with the horses, and wait for me at the Red Rocks till daybreak."

The old man crept to his bundles of sticks, and slipped them here and there under the most distant tents, lighting the end of a match which projected from each. Meanwhile Hassan had pacified the two chiefs by dint of persuasions and promises. Kara Shitan delightedly thrust in his girdle a magnificent sabre, which Mohammed eyed with regret. "Well," said he, "since I have bought the sultana give her to me."

"It is just," said the graybeard. He called the stranger; the curtain rose; and a veiled woman came forth, wrapped in an Egyptian mantle.

The young Arnaut approached her, and said in a softened voice, "Madam, war has its rights; you no longer belong to the sherif, but to me. I have bought you with my gold; if necessary, I would have bought you with my blood."

"It is a dear bargain," said a mocking voice which made Abdallah start.

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"Beauty is above all price," said Mohammed. "What treasure could pay for your charms?"

"Two purses would be enough," replied the veiled lady.

"Madam, that was not the opinion of the sherif. I am sure that the Commander of the Faithful would give half his wealth to be in my place, with the beautiful Egyptian by his side."

"If the caravan is still on its way, the beautiful Egyptian will be at Taif to-morrow," returned the stranger.

"Who are you, then?" asked Mohammed. For the answer, the veil fell, and showed the ebony face and white teeth of Cafour. The negress made so strange a figure that the old Arnaut could not help bursting into a laugh which raised to its height the fury of his companion.

"Woe to him who has trifled with me!" cried Mohammed, looking at Kara Shitan; "he shall pay me sooner or later. As for you, dog, you shall carry it no farther." And blind with rage, he drew a pistol and fired at the child. The negress staggered, uttering a cry of pain and terror. At the same instant a shot was heard, and Mohammed reeled and fell. Abdallah was in the tent with a pistol in his hand.

"To arms!" cried the chiefs, putting their hands to their belts. Swifter than lightning, Cafour overturned the table and lamp with her foot, and Abdallah felt a little hand grasp his and draw him to the back of the tent. To enter the woman's apartments

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and lift a corner of the canvas was an easy thing for Cafour, who seemed to see in the dark. Once outside, Abdallah took the child in his arms and fled to the desert.

The voice of the chiefs had roused the whole band, but on rushing into the tent they could find no one. "To horse!" cried Hassan; "dead or alive, the traitor shall not escape us."

All at once a burning torch fell in the midst of the brush. The frightened horses rushed into the plain, and at the same time the cry of fire was raised. The conflagration spread in every direction, while at a distance shots were fired at the sentinels. "Come, my children," said the captain; "it is an attack; the enemy is at hand. Forward!"

Hafiz had his ear to the ground. "Allah is great; Abdallah is saved!" he exclaimed, when he heard the enemy coming toward him. He plunged into a thicket and waited for the Arnauts to pass; then, leaping upon a stray horse, he galloped into the desert, without troubling himself about the balls that whistled round him.





XVIII

THE SILVER LEAF



ABDALLAH ran with his burden to the rock where he had tethered the horses. He seated Cafour before him on the saddle, and gave full rein to Hamama, who flew over the ground, followed by the horse of Hafiz. An hour passed before the son of Yusuf dared stop to listen. Becoming more tranquil in proportion as he advanced, he at last slackened his speed, and tried to steer his course in the darkness toward the place where he was to meet his uncle.

During this rapid flight Cafour had remained mute and motionless, pressed close to Abdallah. When she understood that the danger was passed, she called him her savior. "Were you too a prisoner?" she whispered.

"No, thank God," answered Abdallah.

"Then why did you come among the tents of your enemies?"

"Why?" said the son of Yusuf, smiling; "to save you, of course."

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The answer surprised Cafour. She mused for some time. "Why did you wish to save me?" she said.

"Because you had been confided to my keeping."

"Keep me always, Abdallah; no one will protect me like you."

"I am not your master," answered the young chief; "you belong to Leila."

Cafour sighed and said no more. On reaching the Red Rocks, Abdallah lifted her from the saddle. She uttered a cry, which she instantly smothered. "It is nothing, master; I am wounded," she whispered, and she stretched out her bleeding arm. The ball had grazed the shoulder, tearing the flesh. Abdallah examined the wound by the light of the stars, then sponged and bandaged it, while Cafour looked at him with astonishment.

"Since I do not belong to you, why do you bind up my wound?" she asked.

"Silence, heathen! you know not the words of the Book of Truth: 'Serve God, and associate no creature with him; show kindness unto parents and relations and orphans and the poor, and your neighbor who is of kin to you, and also your neighbor who is a stranger, and to your familiar companion, and the traveller, and the captives whom your right hands shall possess; for God loveth neither pride, nor vanity, nor avarice.'"

"That is beautiful," said Cafour; "it was a great God who said it."

"Hush, and go to sleep," interrupted the young man; "the road will be long to-morrow, and you need

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rest." As he spoke, Abdallah took the child on his lap, and wrapping her in his burnoose, supported her head with his arm. Cafour soon fell asleep. At first she tossed about and talked in her sleep, while her heart beat so loudly that Abdallah could hear it. By degrees she grew calmer, her limbs relaxed, and she slept so sweetly that she could hardly be heard to breathe. The soldier gently rocked the young girl whom the fate of war had given him for a day, thinking, as he gazed on her, of his mother and all that she had suffered for him. He remained thus through the night, enjoying a peace to which he had before been a stranger. A deep silence reigned around him on the earth; in the heavens all was motionless save that luminous army which for centuries has obeyed the command of the Eternal. This repose of all things refreshed Abdallah's soul, and he forgot both the dangers of the day and the anxiety of the morrow.

A faint streak of light in the horizon had scarcely announced the dawn, when the cry of a jackal was heard in the distance. The sound was thrice repeated. Abdallah echoed it. His cry was answered, and a panting horse bounded to the rock—Hafiz was safe.

"Well, nephew," said he laughing, "the trick has succeeded; they are smoked out like so many rats. Forward! we must not make them wait for us at Taif."

A red light streaked the east. Abdallah spread the carpet of prayer, and the two comrades, with their faces turned toward Mecca, thanked the All-Powerful who had rescued them from peril.

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"Abdallah," said Cafour, falling on her knees before her savior, "you are my god; I will worship no other."

"Silence, heathen!" cried the son of Yusuf. "There is but one God, who has no associate,—the Eternal, the Incomparable; it is He whom you must worship and adore."

"Then your God shall be my God," said Cafour. "I will not have a god that leaves me to be murdered."

"Your god," said Abdallah, "is deaf, dumb, and blind; it is some piece of wood rotting in the Maghreb."

"No," interrupted the child, "my god was with me, and did not help me. Here," she added, taking from her hair a tuft of feathers, "take it; break it in pieces. I want it no longer."

"Is that bunch of feathers your god?" said Hafiz, smiling.

"Yes," replied the child, "it is the god my mother gave me when she sold me. It is pretty; look at it." And pulling out and breaking the feathers while she loaded them with reproaches, she took from the bunch a thin piece of silver, which she gave to Abdallah.

"My uncle," cried the latter, in a transport of joy, "see what has come to us from the Maghreb! God has sent us the shamrock-leaf. You have saved me, my uncle! Glory and gratitude to God!"

And the two friends, intoxicated with joy, embraced the child, who, not understanding their caresses, gazed at them with tears in her eyes, astonished and happy at feeling herself beloved.



XIX

THE SECRET



WHEN the two friends at last perceived the caravan winding like a huge serpent in the distance, night was approaching; the last beams of the sun shone on the white houses of Taif, gleaming amid the gardens like eglantines in a thicket. They were quitting the empire of the sands; the peril was overcome, and the journey finished. At the sight of Taif, Abdallah was seized with bitter sorrow. Restless, troubled, bereft of his reason, one thought filled his soul,—Leila was lost to him. The Bedouins received their companions with cries of joy. Omar embraced his brother with the greatest tenderness. Abdallah remained cold to all these caresses; his only emotion was on parting with Cafour. The poor girl threw herself into her savior's arms, and nothing could tear her from them, until at last Abdallah was forced harshly to command her to return to her mistress. She departed in tears. The son of Yusuf fixed a longing gaze on her; he had broken the last link that bound him to Leila.

Cafour was approaching the litter when Omar called to her, showing her two articles which he held in his hand. "Come hither, child of Satan," he said in a half-jeering, half-threatening tone; "what is the difference between this whip and this necklace of five strings of pearls?"

"The same difference that there is between your brother and you," answered the negress. "One is as beautiful as the rainbow; the other is fit for nothing but to kindle the fires of the pit."

"You have your father's wit," returned Omar, calmly; "it will not be hard, therefore, for you to choose. Do you want the necklace?"

"Yes, indeed," said the negress, with sparkling eyes. "What am I to do for it?"

"Very little. In an hour you will be in the harem; every one will wish to see you, and nothing will be easier than for you to gain admittance to the sheriff's wife, the Sultana Fatima. Repeat to her, word for word, what I shall tell you, and the necklace is yours."

"Give it to me," said Cafour, stretching out her hand; "I am listening."

"While you are amusing the sultana with your ape's face and kittenish grimaces, whisper to her, 'Mistress, I have a message to you from a friend. "Moon of May," he says, "a new moon is approaching. If you do not wish her to disturb the serenity of your nights, keep the sun in the sign of Gemini. Importune, urge, and command. Take for your motto, Love is like madness; everything is forgiven it."'"

"Repeat the last sentence," said Cafour. "Good; I know it now: 'Love is like madness; everything is forgiven it.' The sultana shall have your message. One word only: can these words do any harm to your brother?"

"None," replied the son of Mansour, suppressing a smile. "Abdallah has nothing whatever to do with it. He is threatened by no danger; and even if he were in peril, these words would insure his safety. Farewell. Speak of this to no one; and if you obey me, rely on my generosity. The date is ripe, who will gather it?" he added to himself. "I am rid of the handsome Abdallah; it remains for me now to second the sultana's jealousy and add to the enemies of the sherif. The game is not without danger, but cost what it may, Leila must quit the harem; once outside of it, she is mine."

On rejoining her mistress, Cafour was surprised to see her pale and haggard, her eyes glittering with fever.

"What is the matter?" said the child. "Are you weeping when your happiness is about to begin,—when you will have four slaves to wait on you, robes of velvet and satin, Cashmere scarfs, slippers embroidered with gold and pearls, enamel necklaces, diamond tiaras, and ruby and sapphire bracelets? What more can a woman desire? You were so happy at coming here on quitting Egypt, why have you changed?"

"You can not understand me; you are only a child," said Leila, in a languishing voice.

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"I am no longer a child, mistress," returned the negress. "I am almost twelve years old; I am a woman; you can trust in me."

"Ah, my poor Cafour," cried the Egyptian, sighing, "if you would preserve your heart, keep your eyes shut. Why did I see that handsome young man? Had it not been for him, I should have joyfully entered the harem; now I shall be there like the dead among the living."

"Do you love Abdallah, then?" asked the child, touched by this confidence.

"Do I love him? Is it possible to see him without loving him? Is there a more beautiful face than his in paradise? His look is so gracious, his voice so sweet, his very name is perfume! Do I love him? Awake, my soul lives for him alone; asleep, my heart wakes and languishes with love! Would to God that I had been born amid the tents, with this Bedouin for my brother, that I might cast myself into his arms with none to despise me!"

"Go with him," said Cafour. "I will tell him to carry you off."

"What are you thinking of? I am a slave; I have a master. Besides, do you think that Abdallah would ever break his word? He is taking me to the sherif; would you have him betray his faith?"

"Then tell the sherif to give you Abdallah for a husband."

"Hush, idiot. Such a request would be the death-sentence of us all."

Cafour musingly repeated to herself Omar's message; then, looking at Leila, "Mistress," said she, "if you should become Abdallah's wife, and go to dwell with him amid the tents, would you keep me with you?"

"Always, child. I love you; you shall never quit me."

"Should I be your slave and Abdallah's all my life?"

"Of course. But of what use is such a question?"

"Swear this to me," returned Cafour, in a solemn voice, "and let me alone. Do not question me; do not shake your head with disdain. What do you risk in swearing what I ask? Would you sell me or send me away?"

"No, indeed. Should it please God for me to become the wife of him whom I love like my own soul, you shall always remain with us; I swear it to you in the name of God, the clement, the merciful, the Sovereign of the worlds—"

"My mistress, I am an ignorant heathen; swear it to me only by the God of Abdallah." Talking thus, the two friends reached the harem, where numerous companions awaited them. Cafour, still laughing, leaped from the palanquin and ran toward a large room, brilliantly lighted, and filled with tables covered with silver and flowers. Leila complained of the fatigue of the journey, and retired to her chamber to weep without restraint. Useless grief, powerless to remedy an ill that could not be cured! "He who is intoxicated with wine," says the sage of Shiraz, "awakens during the night; he who is intoxicated with love awakens only on the morning of the resurrection!"



XX

THE PATIENCE OF REYNARD



BDALLAH wished to set out the same evening, and Hafiz was not less impatient. It seemed to him that by fleeing to the desert his nephew would leave anxiety and sorrow behind him. But the sherif had announced that he would receive the chiefs of the caravan the next day, and it was impossible to decline the honor.

At an early hour they repaired to the palace. The courtyard was full of Bedouins, dressed in their blue robes set off by a scarlet scarf thrown across the shoulder. All wished to shake hands with the brave Abdallah and the prudent Hafiz. Omar talked in a low voice with the old shepherd. For the first time he complained of the dangers of the road; for the first time he reproached the sherif for having exposed so many brave men to almost certain death. Hafiz approved his words, and seconded them with a warmth which delighted the son of Mansour.

The visitors were led by black slaves into a room covered with rich carpets, and surrounded with divans

of green silk embroidered with gold. The walls were bare of all ornament except a beautiful Turkish sabre, set with topazes and rubies, a gift from the sultan. Omar pointed it out to Hafiz, who, while murmuring against what he called a weakness, nevertheless bowed respectfully before the Commander of the Faithful. After receiving the salutations of all the band, the sherif clapped his hands, and pipes and coffee were instantly served. The Bedouins seated themselves on the ground, and each smoked in silence. Abdallah started; among the crowd of servants who stood awaiting their master's orders, he had just seen Cafour, who raised her hand to her throat. Whether it was to him or to some other that the child made the sign, he could not guess; no one raised his eyes, least of all Omar.

The descendant of the Prophet seemed buried in deep reflection. He was a noble-looking old man, whose white beard, large nose, and calm eyes gave him an air of majesty. A large turban, a blue robe of the finest Cashmere, and a girdle of gold and purple, in which glittered a dagger covered with precious stones, added to his dignity. At heart, the sherif was a sage who thought of no one but himself. Intractable toward all who disturbed his peace, he was the gentlest of mankind when his passions and habits were let alone. Power had not spoiled him; he readily listened to the truth when it did not affect himself, and suffered without complaint the most shameless falsehoods of his flatterers and servants. Fastidious,

a great lover of stories, and a refined poet, his only weakness—a weakness natural to his age—was the desire to be loved. Thanks to this secret, which she had learned the very first day, the beautiful Fatima made her master the most obedient of slaves; she made him submit to all her fancies by telling him that a woman's caprices are a proof of her love. At sixty it is easier to believe than to quarrel, and the sherif yielded to avoid a storm, too happy when he was rewarded with a caress. This morning, however, there was not a cloud on the horizon. The Commander of the Faithful seemed in excellent humor; he smiled as he ran his fingers through his long beard, and looked like a man just waking from a blissful dream which he would fain retain.

The second pipe finished, the sherif took up the conversation, and in the most gracious terms thanked the Bedouins and Omar for their visit and their services. Instead of replying to this courtesy, the son of Mansour started up like a criminal struck with terror, and prostrating himself before the descendant of the Prophet, kissed his feet.

"Son of Ali and of Hassan," said he in a broken voice, "I know what the slave deserves who suffers his master's trust to be violated. I know my crime, and await without complaint the punishment reserved for me by your justice."

"Rise," said the sherif, kindly. "What is written is written. God sends disaster and success by turns to men, in order that he may know the believers,

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and choose his witnesses from among you. As to the insult offered me by those wretches, I shall choose the day and hour for reparation. Patience—with patience everything comes in due season.”

“Alas!” continued the son of Mansour, still on his knees, “the attack was nothing; my brother Abdallah and his brave Bedouins repulsed the traitors. But we were surprised; the slave was for a moment in the hands of the enemy; those men without faith and honor tore off her veil, and profaned with their unworthy looks that beauty which should have been sacred from all.”

“Enough!” interrupted the sherif, displeased at this tale. “The care of my honor concerns me alone. Patience!”

“Patience!” exclaimed Hafiz; “that was what the fox said when he feigned death.”

“What was it that the fox said?” asked the sherif, looking sternly at Hafiz, who seemed moved by any other feeling than that of fear.

“There was once a fox who was growing old,” said the Bedouin, “and who abandoned the chase and all adventures in order every night to visit a poultry-yard near his hole, where he grew fat without trouble or danger. One night he forgot how the time was passing, and when he was ready to go out, he found the sun risen and every one at work. To return safely seemed impossible; so in order not to brave certain danger, he stretched himself by the roadside and pretended to be dead, saying, ‘Patience; in

patience there is safety.' The first who passed by paid no attention to him. The second turned him over with his foot to be sure that he was dead. The third was a child, who amused himself by pulling out his whiskers. 'Patience!' said the fox. 'The child knows not what he is doing; he does not mean to insult me. It is better to suffer vexation than to run the risk of death.' Next came a hunter with a gun on his shoulder. 'A fox's nail is a sovereign remedy for a felon,' said he, taking out his knife. 'Patience!' said the fox; 'it is better to live with three paws than to die with four;' and he let himself be mutilated without stirring. Next came a woman with a child on her shoulder. 'This fox's teeth will make a necklace that will preserve my babe from the evil eye,' said she."

"I know the story," interrupted the sheriff; "when the mother came near, the fox flew in her face."

"My story does not say so," returned Hafiz, gravely. "When once we compound with our courage, we know not where to stop. The fox let himself be robbed of his teeth, repeating 'Patience!' and lay still till a last thief tore out his heart, when he saw, but too late, that patience is the surest of dangers."

"I begin to think so," said the sheriff, "since a Bedouin comes to my palace to tell me his foolish stories. A shepherd must be rude indeed not to understand my indulgence and to insult my goodness. If the caravan was attacked in a safe country traversed by all the merchants, whose fault was it except those who chose for their leader a child whom I spare through

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pity? A dozen armed and resolute Bedouins always cross the desert without any one daring to attack them. If the Arnauts surprised you, a snare must have been laid for you, into which you fell either through folly or treachery."

"My lord," cried the son of Mansour, raising his hands in supplication, "you speak truly; this was my fault. In choosing my brother and friend for the leader of the caravan, I ought to have remembered that at our age passion renders us blind. Chance destroyed us. At the beginning of the journey the sight of the slave troubled the young man, and made him forget his prudence."

"What do I hear?" cried the sherif, with flashing eyes. "Is this the way that I am obeyed? Is this the way that I am respected? Woe to him who has trifled with me! He shall see whether I will submit to insult. Merchant, you shall be punished for your imprudence, and, young man, you shall suffer for your folly." And calling a negro with a large sabre at his side, the Commander of the Faithful pointed to Omar and Abdallah, making a horizontal movement with his hand. It was the sentence of death.

The Bedouins looked at each other, shuddering, but no one, not even Hafiz, dared rebel against the descendant of the Prophet. Omar heard the sentence without changing countenance; he looked around him as if to implore aid, and raising his hand, made a sign to the negress which she did not seem to comprehend. The son of Mansour frowned angrily. "Accursed be

the dervish!" murmured he. "Can he have told the truth? Is my confidence in the Bedouin about to plunge me into this ruin? Can I have loved this madman better than I thought?"

Abdallah raised his eyes and proudly smiled at the executioner. "Poor child!" said Hafiz, embracing his nephew, "I have slain you."

"No, my father," replied the young man, calmly, "it is God that gives life and death. Be resigned, and comfort my mother. Do not pity me; to me death is better than life." Then, turning to Omar, who still kept his eyes fixed on the negress, he gave him his hand. "My brother, pardon me," said he, "in the name of her who watched over your childhood." And bowing respectfully to the Commander of the Faithful, he followed the executioner.

"Stop!" cried Cafour, falling at the sherif's feet. "It was my fault; it was I that snatched off my mistress's veil. Kill me, but spare Abdallah."

"Drive off this daughter of a dog, and punish her till she is silent," said the sherif.

"Pardon!" cried the child, as a negro was carrying her off,—*"pardon!"* and with a desperate effort she tore herself from the slave, leaving a piece of her dress in his hands. "Pity!" she murmured, clasping the knees of the sherif, who rudely repulsed her. "Pity, master; Abdallah is innocent; he was not the guilty one." Then, suddenly spying Omar's contracted features, she sprang up as if struck with lightning, and stretching her hands toward the prince, "Do not

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be cruel," said she. "Remember that love is like madness; everything is forgiven it."

"Stop!" cried the sherif to the executioner. "There is something strange in this," thought he; "it is the same sentence that Fatima repeated to me this morning, and refused to explain to me. Come here, child," said he to Cafour, in a milder tone. "Where do these words come from—do you know?"

"Yes," said Cafour; "they come from lips that open only for consolation and pity."

"Do you know the meaning of them?"

"Yes," replied Cafour, trembling as she spoke. "Abdallah has never heard these words, but Omar has long known the secret of them. Question him; he will tell you everything."

"Oh, my master," cried Omar, dragging himself to the sherif's feet, and speaking in a suppressed voice, "the child is right. I know these words but too well; they were the cause of my fault, and will perhaps excuse it. When you summoned me to Taif, my errand was suspected; before I could quit your palace, a mad promise was wrung from me, which I have only too faithfully obeyed. I compromised the slave as I had been commanded. Could I resist a will protected by your love? Happy is he who can inspire such ardent passion; will not happiness render him indulgent?"

While uttering these unblushing falsehoods, the son of Mansour studied the sherif's face, which resumed its serenity. Omar soon ceased to supplicate the old man who held his life in his hands. Sure of his vic-

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tory, he began to flatter him beyond measure, and by adroit words gradually soothed the last emotions of anger in his soul.

"Rise! I pardon you," said the sherif, at length. "I also pardon this proud Bedouin, who braves me even under the sword of the executioner. I have shown that I fear no one, and that I know how to punish those who insult me; it is enough. I keep the blood of my faithful followers for a better occasion. Young man," he added, looking at Abdallah with a kindly smile, "remember that henceforth your life belongs to me; I rely on you, as well as your friends, to avenge our common insult."

For his sole answer, the son of Yusuf took the sherif's hand and kissed it with emotion, while Hafiz burst into transports of joy and gratitude.

"Here!" said the Commander of the Faithful, calling Cafour; "come hither, daughter of night. Is this all that the sultana told you?"

"No," answered the negress, boldly, putting on a mysterious air. "The sultana told me that if you pardoned her her mad love, she must also have a proof of your affection."

"Speak," said the old man; "what can I refuse a poor creature that loves me to distraction?"

"The sultana fears that you will refuse her request; to grant it, she says, needs a love as great as her own."

"Speak," said the sherif; "I am dying of impatience."

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"Well, then, do not give her for a rival this strange woman, dishonored by the gaze of the Bedouins and Arnauts."

"Is that all?" replied the Commander of the Faithful, smiling. "What! raise this woman to my throne, after all that has passed? Never! She shall remain a slave, and end her days in a corner of the harem."

"That is not what the sultana means; she is anxious and jealous. What she desires is that Leila should quit the palace, never more to return. 'Let my husband,' said she, 'let the beloved of my soul give me a last pledge of his love. Can he not leave this creature to those who brought her hither? It will be easy to find an honorable match for her among the Bedouins, and I shall be left alone to love the master of my life.'"

"Oh, the weakness of women!" cried the descendant of the Prophet. "The Koran is right in recommending indulgence to us who have strength and sense. This jealousy of Fatima's is madness, at which I should blush to yield, were it not my pleasure to show her that nothing is impossible either to my power or my love. Bring Leila hither, and tell the sultana that her rival shall not return to the harem. Such is my will; I mean that all shall respect it."

And turning to the Bedouins, "My friends," said the sherif, in a loud voice, "I make you the judges of my conduct. What should I do with the Egyptian woman whom you have escorted hither? Through respect for myself, I can not take her as a wife; through respect for the pacha, I can not keep her as a slave.

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This, therefore, is what I propose to do: if there is any one among you who is willing to marry a foreigner, I will give her to him with a fitting dowry, otherwise I will marry her to some rich merchant of Medina or Mecca."

"God is great!" cried the son of Yusuf, seizing Hafiz's arm. "We will look no farther for the four-leaved shamrock. It is here; it is mine; I have found happiness."

"Courage, my son!" said the old man; "it is needed even to be happy. I do not think," he added, looking at the sherif, "that it will be necessary to go to Mecca to marry the stranger. If a husband only is needed, here is a young man who will yield to no one either in birth, fortune or courage."

"My lord," said Omar, bowing low to the sherif, "I should never have had the boldness to raise my eyes to a woman confided to my charge; but since things have changed, and you permit it, I venture to aspire to the hand of Leila. She is a slave of the pacha; from her childhood she has been accustomed to the ease and luxury of the harem. On coming hither she dreamed of a fortune which has escaped her grasp; who knows whether tent-life will not seem hard to her? Wealth is a necessity to a woman that has always lived in a palace. I earnestly entreat your lordship, therefore, to give the stranger to the one that shall offer the largest dowry; it will be a last mark of kindness to her who owes everything to your goodness."

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"The request is just," said the sherif. "Bring the Egyptian hither. Let the suitors come forward; I will hear their proposals."

"My uncle," murmured the son of Yusuf, "I am lost!"

"At last," said Omar, "Leila is mine!"

Cafour looked at the two brothers, and ran to the harem.





XXI

THE AUCTION



WHILE the slaves went in search of Leila, Hafiz approached the son of Mansour. "Omar," said he, "listen to an old man who has dandled you on his knees. It is said that you are richer than your father; women bow before your fortune, and there is not a merchant in Egypt or Syria but would think himself honored by your alliance. Abdallah, on the contrary, can never love another woman; he has given his heart to her whom he has saved. Be generous; pay to-day the debt of gratitude by making your brother and Halima happy."

"My brother is a selfish fellow," answered Omar; "I have suffered too much through him already. He knows that I wish this Egyptian woman; he knows that I will have her at any price; what does he expect to gain, therefore, by declaring himself my rival? If I should lose a hundred thousand piastres, of what advantage would it be to him? Let him give up Leila, and I will try to forget that this very day he has put my head for the second time in danger."

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"It is well for you that you are a Mussulman," said Hafiz, "otherwise we would teach you before the day was over that an ounce of lead weighs more than all your gold; but you have not succeeded, as you think, and with the aid of God, we will confound your abominable selfishness."

Omar shrugged his shoulders and went to meet Leila. She had just entered, concealed from all eyes by the wrappings which enveloped her, yet it seemed to poor Abdallah that a fiery glance shot from the thick veil which he could scarce withstand. Cafour followed her mistress. What she had said to the sultana none could tell, but she had on her neck a necklace of pink coral, which certainly had not been cut for a slave. From time to time she ran to a latticed balcony which overlooked the room, and exchanged mysterious words with invisible figures. The whole harem was there, deeply interested in the fair Leila, and perhaps offering up prayers for the son of Yusuf.

Abdallah was the first to speak. "My sole fortune," said he, "is the spring which I have discovered, and the garden which I have planted. With my father's arms and my mare, these are my only possessions. All are yours, Leila, if you will accept my heart and life."

"They are not worth a hundred thousand piastres," said Omar, coldly. "Here at Taif I have a garden of orange-trees where the sherif sometimes does me the honor to take coffee. This garden is worth more

than two hundred thousand piastres; I offer it to Leila in pledge for a like sum in jewels."

"Jewels!" said Hafiz; "my nephew has those which are as rich as yours. Here is a casket which is worth all your promises."

To the general astonishment, the old shepherd, aided by Cafour, opened a tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl basket, filled with ear-rings, bracelets, and precious stones. Abdallah could not repress a cry. Was not that ruby bracelet the one which Leila wore on her arm on the day of the attack, and was not that coral necklace one which Cafour had just snatched from her neck? He attempted to speak; a gesture of his uncle stopped him.

"Beautiful jewels which have been worn already!" said the son of Mansour, biting his lip. "I do not ask where all these spoils of women come from, which I esteem as they deserve; but my generosity shall not be outdone. I offer three hundred thousand piastres."

"Promising is not giving," interrupted Hafiz; "something more than words is needed."

For his sole reply, Omar drew a pocket-book from his girdle, and taking from it several papers, handed them to the sherif. "My lord," said he, "these are the orders which you sent me some months ago, and which are already filled. They are worth more than a million piastres; will your lordship refuse to be his slave's security till to-morrow to these exacting Bedouins?"

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"It shall be as you desire," answered the sherif. "I will be your security for a hundred thousand piastres."

"If this sum is all that is needed," said one of the Bedouins, "we will not leave a companion in trouble, and will give a lesson to this merchant who forgets himself. Here are our sabres; we will redeem them with a hundred thousand piastres." And taking off his yataghan, he flung it at the sherif's feet with a contemptuous glance at Omar, while Hafiz approached to do the same, and to set an example to the rest of the band.

"Take back your sabre," said the Commander of the Faithful to the Bedouin. "I will be security for you and your friends. God forbid that I should see you disarmed about me, you who are my strength and my glory! Omar," he added, "before making new promises, perhaps you would do well to reflect. Repentance often follows satisfied passion. A lost slave can be replaced, but friends lost are never found again."

"Commander of the Faithful," proudly rejoined the son of Mansour, "it was on the faith of your word that I entered into this business, and unless you command me to stop, I will carry it through. I fear no one's displeasure but yours. And to put an end at once to this wrangling, I offer a million piastres; it is not too large a dowry for a woman whom your lordship has honored with his protection."

"Are you rich enough to commit such follies?" said

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the descendant of the Prophet. "I shall remember it on the first occasion."

"Command, my lord," returned the merchant; "my fortune and life are yours."

A deep silence followed. Leila, who had remained standing, sunk upon a divan; Abdallah cast down his head; and Hafiz and his friends threatened Omar, who braved them with a disdainful air. Cafour began to gesticulate in a strange manner toward the balcony, and disappeared. All eyes were fixed on the sherif, who evidently hesitated.

"I have given my word," said he at last, slowly addressing the Bedouins; "you are witnesses that everything has been done in an impartial manner. This merchant, your companion in the caravan, offers a million; the slave, therefore, must belong to him if none of you offers more."

"Where could such treasures be found in the desert?" cried Hafiz. "Souls sold to Satan alone possess this infernal wealth. As for us, we have nothing but our guns and sabres; may the day come when their value will be felt!"

"You forget Abdallah's jewels," said Omar, smiling.

"Ah, my brother," cried the son of Yusuf, "what have I done that you should treat me thus? Ought you to be the one to plunge a dagger into my breast?"

"What is this?" asked the sherif of two slaves who laid a heavy casket of chased silver at the feet of Abdallah.

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"My lord, it is the treasure of the son of Yusuf," answered one of the porters, as he opened the casket and took up handfuls of the most beautiful precious stones ever seen, which at the first glance were seen to be worth more than a million.

"It is strange," thought the sherif, "how much this diamond tiara and these topaz bracelets resemble those I gave the sultana. Who has sent you?" he asked the slave.

"My lord," replied the negro, bowing, "love is like madness; all things are forgiven it." And he went out.

Abdallah thought himself the sport of a dream. Omar turned pale with rage. "There is some snare here," murmured he; "no matter, I will have the last word. I will give two million piastres, if necessary."

Four more slaves, heavily laden with plate, silver lamps, and chased cups, paused like the first before Abdallah, and laid this treasure at his feet. At the first glance, the sherif recognized a magnificent epergne, the ornament of his harem, which he had received as a present from the sultan, and given, not without regret, to Fatima, the day after a quarrel.

"Who can have given orders to bring all these treasures hither?" he cried.

"My lord," replied the porters, bowing, "love is like madness; all things are forgiven it."

"Let these knaves be bastinadoed," said the Commander of the Faithful; "I will teach them to answer me in proverbs. Who sent them?"

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"My lord, it was Cafour," replied one of the slaves, in a tremulous voice.

"Bring that child of the Devil hither," said the sherif. "If she is let alone, she will carry off my whole palace."

The four slaves had not quitted the room when six more entered, carrying a litter heaped with the most costly robes and the richest stuffs. At the head of the procession was Cafour, giving orders with the gravity of an imaum. The sherif called her, and taking her by the ear, "Come here, wretch," said he; "once for all, will you tell me the meaning of these follies?"

"Love is like madness; all things are forgiven it," answered Cafour, gravely.

"Do you dare to mix up the sultana with this disorder?"

"The sultana is there," rejoined Cafour, tranquilly, pointing to the balcony; "she has seen and heard everything; she knows all, and," she added, lowering her voice, "she is furious."

"Furious? and at what?" cried the astounded sherif.

"She knows," continued Cafour, "that you regret having sacrificed Leila; she has guessed the part played by this merchant, who is bidding in your name; she feels that passion alone could hurry you away so far as to make you humble these brave Bedouins, who are the honor of your empire. 'Since he loves me no longer,' she said, 'I want no more of his favors; take away from my sight the jewels which he has given me, and the robes with which I delighted in adorning

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myself to please him. Carry all to Abdallah; let him contend for me to the last moment. If the master of my soul return to me, what need have I of riches? If he abandon me, I wish to keep nothing but the memory of his love."

The sherif looked at the balcony somewhat ill-humoredly. He fancied that he spied through the lattice a little hand tearing a lace handkerchief in pieces, and the sound of tears and stifled sobs made him cast down his head. That instant he became conscious that the friendship of the Beni Amurs was worth more to him than the gratitude of Omar, and decided on his course.

"I will not be made an accomplice of unworthy weaknesses," said he, in a solemn voice. "I never take back a promise which I have made. I wished to secure a suitable dowry to this woman, who is under my protection; a hundred thousand piastres is sufficient. As to deciding between the rivals, that belongs to Leila. Let her take the merchant or the Bedouin, the city or the desert, it matters little to me. I shall respect her choice, and force all others to do the same."

"Neither David nor Solomon could have judged more righteously," cried Hafiz.

The two brothers stood by the side of Leila. Abdallah gazed at her with deep tenderness, and was mute with hope and fear. Omar spoke, moved with anger and jealousy.

"Think of the future," said he; "do not sacrifice to this man the flower of your youth and beauty. Do you

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know the life of women in the tents?—a beggarly and slavish existence. Are your hands made to grind corn, milk sheep, weave cloth, and gather grass and sticks? Will this Bedouin give you the baths, jewels, and perfumes to which you are accustomed? Will he dye your eyebrows and eyelids? Will he wash your tresses with orange-flower water, and dry them with musk and amber? With me, you will have women to wait on you, robes to deck you, and jewels to adorn you. You will not be a servant, but a mistress; each of your caprices will be a law and a pleasure to me."

Leila bowed, took the trembling hand of Abdallah, and placed it on her head. "I am my lord's slave," she said. "A stranger, I have no other refuge than he; an orphan, I have no other family. He is my father, my mother, and my brother. Oh, my beloved," she added in a low voice, raising her eyes, "at last I am thine, and can tell thee that thou art my joy and my life." And smiling and weeping at the same time, she kissed the hand of her husband.

The Commander of the Faithful gazed delightedly at this spectacle, which renewed his youth. "It is rather a hard lesson for Fatima," thought he; "but I am not sorry for having confounded the sultana. She will be cured for some time of her incurable jealousy."

Omar was mute; his contracted features, his threatening eyes, everything about him betrayed the conflict of grief and pride.

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"Son of Mansour," said Hafiz, "you should marry Cafour. Your soul is as black as her skin; you would have children worthy of their grandfather Satan."

"You are cruel, my uncle," exclaimed the son of Yusuf. "If Omar had been in my place, he would have spared us. My brother," he added, extending his hand to the Egyptian, "forgive me my happiness."

"You are shrewder than I; I congratulate you on your success," answered Omar. And he quitted the room in despair.

"What a fine thing is youth!" said Hafiz; "how honest! how confiding! what faith in virtue! As for me, I am old, and have been in battle. When I find a wicked man under my feet, I crush him like a scorpion, that he may sting me no more."





XXII

THE ARRIVAL



It is easier to retain wealth in the hand of a prodigal, or to carry water in a sieve, than to lodge patience in the heart of a lover. The day had not dawned and the bird had not quitted its nest when the son of Yusuf awakened his companions, and arranged in a long file the camels loaded with the gifts of the sherif and the sultana.

He impatiently awaited his beloved, whom Fatima had kept with her all night, that she might tell her the story of her love. A woman always loves the rival that she has ceased to fear.

When Cafour opened the door of the harem and showed herself, uglier and more smiling than ever, Abdallah uttered a cry of surprise and joy. Could the woman behind the child, who stretched out her hand to him, really be Leila?

It was she,—a lover could not be mistaken; yet it was no longer the Egyptian loaded with jewels, but a Bedouin who had always lived in the tents. Leila

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was clad in a long blue cotton robe, which was gathered around the neck and fell to the feet. Over this robe was a red woollen burnoose, which covered her head.

Her black tresses, arranged in numerous small braids, each ending in a coral bead, fell to her eyes, and added to the softness and brilliancy of her glance. In this simple costume, with her head uncovered, and her feet bare, Leila was the queen of the desert. The delighted Bedouins saluted her as she passed, as fresh and smiling as the dawn.

They set out. A recent storm had revived nature; the grass, wet with dew, and the freshly opened flowers smiled on these happy hearts. Leila no longer hid herself in the back of the palanquin; Abdallah rode beside her, talking all the way, with his hand on the side of the litter. Cafour had never been more talkative and saucy.

"Oh, Abdallah," said Leila, "if you bear so hard on the side of the litter, you will overturn it and throw us both on the ground."

"Well, let go the camel's rein, then; don't refuse me the pleasure of holding your hand."

"Ingrate!" cried Cafour, "you have quite forgotten me. So, black Bedouin, you are carrying off the wife of the Calif Moyawiah!"

And with a joyous voice, she struck up the Bedouin girl's song:¹—

¹ The song of the beautiful Bedouin girl Moyawiah is renowned among the Arabs. See Burton's "Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El Medina and Mecca."

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"Oh, take these purple robes away;
Give back my cloak of camel's hair,
And bear me from this towering pile
To where the black tents flap in air.
The camel's colt, with faltering tread,
The dog that all but barks at me,
Delight me more than ambling mules,
Than every art of minstrelsy.
And any cousin, poor but free,
Might take me, fatted ass, from thee."

They went on thus the whole day, unconscious of heat or fatigue. When joy follows suffering, do we think of aught else than joy? Hafiz, besides, was there to lead the caravan, and Abdallah did not need to quit the treasure that the Bedouins were bringing back in triumph.

Night was approaching when they came in sight of the tents of the Beni Amurs. The sun was setting beneath the arch of an immense rainbow that spanned half the sky, a roseate light illumined the sands of the desert, and golden rays flashed their gleams on the summit of the granite pyramids. In the distance were heard the shrill cry of the sakiah, the barking of the dogs, and the cooing of the pigeons. Suddenly a piercing shout announced the return of the travellers.

"What cry is that?" asked Leila.

"It is my mother's voice," replied Abdallah, dismounting from his horse. "You will have two to love you."

Halima soon appeared, greatly astonished at the sight of so long a caravan. "What are these?" said she, pointing to the packages. "Has the son of Yusuf sold his horse and arms to turn merchant?"

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"Yes, my mother," answered Abdallah; "and I bring you the rarest and choicest of wares,—a daughter to respect and assist you."

Leila alighted from the litter and threw herself into the arms of Halima, who looked at her with astonishment, and asked the name of her father and tribe. She was not less surprised at the sight of Cafour, and despite all Hafiz's speeches, returned to the tent with a sign. She had little liking for a stranger woman. But when Abdallah came and seated himself by her side after unloading the camels, and Leila hastened with a basin of warm water to wash her husband's feet herself, "God be praised!" cried Halima; "this woman will be truly a handmaid unto her husband. My house has at last found a mistress; I can die in peace." And she tenderly embraced the daughter whom God had given her in his goodness.

"What is the matter, master?" said Cafour, who was lying at Abdallah's feet, with her head resting on her preserver's lap. "Has the smoke of your pipe got into your eyes? You look as if you were crying. Oh, your pipe has gone out; will you have a coal to light it?"

"Hush! hush!" said the Bedouin, stroking the negress's head as if caressing a faithful dog. The child lay down again, at the same time jerking her mistress's arm so suddenly that Leila's forehead came in contact with Abdallah's lips. Cafour laughed at the success of her stratagem. Poor creature! to whom everything was denied, and who found means to be happy by placing her happiness in that of others.



XXIII

KARA SHITAN



MAR had returned to Djiddah with despair in his heart. It was in vain that his slaves tried to divert him; it was in vain that business and gold poured in on him from all sides; his passion consumed him. He passed whole days in his chamber, sitting cross-legged on a carpet, revolving impossible projects in his brain, and seeking for a vengeance which escaped him.

"Of what avail is my father's wish to me?" he cried. "Of what use is my health and the money that I have accumulated? Am I any the less, on that account, the most unhappy of men? That wretched Bedouin, in his poverty, triumphs over me. I am lonely and desolate in the midst of my abundance. Accursed be life! accursed be my brother! The oracle has not deceived me; I am slain by my best friend." And he relapsed into his despair.

The grief of Omar was the talk of the whole city. If little love was felt for the son of Mansour, on the other hand his fortune was greatly esteemed. Was

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there not some service to offer, or some consolation to sell him? it was asked. After such an insult, he would well reward whosoever should avenge him on the Bedouin. Such words are not lost. It is the curse of the rich that there are those around them ready to enter the fires of hell in their behalf. The passions of the poor are flames which consume the heart, and then quickly die out; the passions of the rich are a brazier, fed by all about it, and giving forth conflagration, crime, and death.

One morning the son of Mansour received a visit from an Arnaut captain, who came, he said, on important business that would suffer no delay. Omar received him politely, and ordered pipes and coffee to be served.

"Capital coffee!" said the captain, sipping it slowly; "as bitter as death, as black as Satan, and as hot as Hades. And what an exquisite mixture of nutmeg, cinnamon, and clove! What a fine thing it is to be rich! the world seems to move for you alone."

"Men are sometimes mistaken about the happiness of the rich," said Omar, sighing.

"Bah! a rich man in sorrow is a miser who knows not how to use his gold. If he loves a woman, let him buy her; if he wishes to be rid of a rival, let him sell his skin. Everything can be bought here on earth; with money a man can have everything."

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked the son of Mansour.

"My name is Kara Shitan," replied the stranger. "I am an Arnaut chief,—one of those who attacked

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you in the desert. By killing my friend Mohammed, your brother Abdallah made me lose five thousand duros; pay me this sum and I will rid you of Abdallah."

"A murder!" said Omar.

"Bah!" rejoined the captain, coldly; "if God had not invented death, it would not be long before we should eat each other. Away with false scruples! When an occasion offers, wisdom commands us not to let it slip. It is just to force our enemies to drink the bitter cup which they have made us taste; we are right in striking them with the weapon with which they were the first to wound us."

"My brother!" said Omar, in a hesitating tone.

"Your brother and your enemy. What matters his death to you? you will have no hand in it. I shall kill Abdallah like a dog if I find him in the desert. I shall avenge my own quarrel; only, in order to avenge myself, I must have five thousand duros."

"Of what use will your vengeance be to me?" said the son of Mansour.

"I know nothing about it," replied Kara Shitan. "I don't understand business as well as you do; but if I were in your place, and Abdallah should disappear, I should find no trouble in gaining possession of the beautiful Leila. The Bedouin, it is said, has no family but his mother and an old dotard; a little courage and resolution will remove these obstacles. An abduction is an easy matter; Leila once a widow and in your house, it will not take long to console her. What is there to fear? The sherif? At Djiddah, men laugh

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at the anger of the Bedouins. The pacha? He is a man like the rest of us; he has a conscience, and we know its price."

"And the tribe—have you thought of that?"

"The tribe is nothing," said the captain. "I know that these Bedouins have as much rancor and malice as their camels; but blood can be bought as well as other things. Money is not despised in the desert any more than anywhere else, and the Beni Amurs will console themselves with Abdallah's inheritance."

"Yes," returned Omar, "blood can be ransomed when the murder is involuntary. A hundred camels is the price of a man's blood; but there is no composition for murder, and I shall suffer death."

"The desert is mute," said the captain, "and dead men tell no tales. He who finds a shrivelled corpse among the sands must be shrewd indeed if he can distinguish a murder from an accident. But we will say no more about it," added he, rising. "What is the charming Leila, whom I have never beheld, to me? Let her love her Bedouin; let them be happy together and laugh at the son of Mansour,—it is all the same to me. After all, Abdallah is a brave man, and I respect him; if you had inflicted on him the outrage which you have received, he would not haggle about the price of vengeance. Farewell."

"Stay!" cried the son of Mansour; "you are right. While Abdallah lives there is no security for me on earth; it was predicted to me at my birth, and I feel it daily. Deliver me from this enemy. As to the

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cripple, I have an account to settle with him which I will attend to myself. Leila, you will cost me dear!"

"If you take my advice," resumed the captain, "we shall both strike at the same time. I will entice away Abdallah, never more to return, and you shall carry off the lady; all will be done in two hours, and the enemy overthrown even before he suspects the danger."

"So be it," said Omar; "but remember that I never wish to see your face again."

"That is very natural," replied Kara Shitan. "Tell me the day and hour, give me the five thousand dours, and rely on my punctuality. My reputation is made; I would not fail to keep my word for the finest horses in Arabia."





XXIV

HOSPITALITY



WHILE avarice and hatred were plotting Abdallah's death, the son of Yusuf was enjoying his happiness without dreaming of a cloud in the horizon. Could he suspect that he had an enemy when his soul was so pure and his heart so free from bitterness? He who loves and is beloved looks on all men as his brethren. For a month he had been intoxicated with joy and tenderness, with no other care than that of admiring Leila and thanking God for having blessed his house.

In one of those hot, misty mornings which precede a storm, Abdallah was reposing in his garden in the shade of the citron-trees. Cafour carelessly lay at his feet, her eyes fixed on him like a dog watching for an order or a glance. At the back of the tent Halima was baking loaves in the ashes, while Leila, seated before a loom, was embroidering gold and silver lozenges on her husband's burnoose. The son of Yusuf abandoned himself to the happiness of living surrounded by all whom he loved. The barking of the

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dogs roused him from his reverie. A man had stopped his camel at the garden gate, and was stretching out his hand to the young Bedouin. Leila disappeared, and Abdallah went to meet the stranger.

"Welcome!" said he; "thy arrival brings us the blessing of God. The house and all it contains are thine; thou art the master thereof."

"Son of Yusuf," answered the stranger, "I will not set foot on the ground till thou hast sworn to render me the service of which I am in need."

"Speak," said Abdallah. "Thou art a guest; thy word is a command."

"I am a poor merchant from Syria," resumed the stranger. "I have been to Mecca on business. Yesterday I was drawn into a quarrel in the Holy City with a Beni Motayr, and had the misfortune to kill my adversary. His family and friends are pursuing me; I have no one to defend me. If I can not reach the noble Medina, I am lost. You alone, it is said, can conduct me thither in safety. My life is in your hands; decide my fate."

"Enter my tent," replied the son of Yusuf. "In two hours we will set out."

"Remember," said the merchant, "that I trust myself to you alone."

"I alone will accompany you," returned Abdallah. "I answer for your safety on my head."

No sooner had the stranger been brought into the tent and confided to the care of Halima than the young Bedouin went out to prepare for departure.

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Cafour stopped him on the way. "Do you know this man?" said she.

"No; what matters it? It was God that sent him hither."

"He is not a merchant,—I have seen his pistols; they are too handsome. He is a soldier. Beware of him!"

"Soldier or merchant, what have I to fear from a stranger and a fugitive?" returned Abdallah. "Make haste and prepare supper; I have only time to tell Leila of the journey."

When the son of Yusuf returned to his guest, Cafour had spread the table with unleavened bread, pressed dates, boiled rice, new milk, and cold water. She bustled about him and gazed at him earnestly, trying to recall where she had seen this face, which seemed familiar to her. The stranger was perfectly calm and indifferent. In her anxiety, she determined to arouse him and break the charm that hid the danger. Seizing an earthen vase, she placed herself behind the pretended merchant, and threw it on the ground, shivering it in pieces; the stranger looked angrily around.

"The Arnaut!" cried she, looking at her master.

"Begone!" said Abdallah, "and do not trouble me with your follies."

Cafour glided to a corner of the tent, and soon returned with boiling tea. The stranger was perfectly tranquil; the word "Arnaut" had not moved him.

"My guest," said Abdallah, "welcome to this poor

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table. The journey will be long, and it is good to strengthen yourself against the fatigue to come. Satisfy your hunger."

"Excuse me," replied the merchant; "my anxiety and fatigue have given me a fever, and I have but one desire,—to set out on my way."

"Salt is good for the appetite," said Cafour, and taking a handful of salt, she thrust it into the stranger's mouth and fled to the garden.

"Wretch!" cried Abdallah, "I will chastise your insolence!" as he rushed furiously after Cafour to punish her.

"Strike," said Cafour, weeping, "strike the dog that warns you, and caress the jackal that will devour you. Did you not hear the dogs howl this morning? they saw Azrael. Madman, your sins blind you; death is hovering over this house. Do you not know that merchant?"

"A guest is above suspicion," interrupted Abdallah; and returning to the tent, he found the stranger seated in the same place, with a smile on his lips.

"The slave has given me a lesson in politeness," said he. "The beard of the guest is in the hand of the master of the tent; I will endeavor to do honor to your hospitality."

He fell to eating with an excellent appetite for a sick man, talking freely and seeking every means to be agreeable to Abdallah.

At the moment of departure, when the stranger was already mounted, Leila came out, with her face

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half concealed in her burnoose, holding a pitcher in her hand, from which she sprinkled a few drops of water on the feet and haunches of the camel. "May God give thee a good journey," said she, "and conduct thee back in safety to those who love and watch for thee!"

"Those who love me are under ground," answered the stranger; "and since I lost my mother, twenty years ago, no one has watched for me."

"Then may God give thee a wife to love thee and grow old by thy side!"

"Let us go," said the stranger, abruptly; "the moments are numbered."

"My lord," said Leila to her husband, "thou bearest happiness away with thee; mayest thou soon bring it back again!"

Cafour was by Abdallah's side. "Master," said she, "don't you take your gun?"

"No, it would be an insult to him whom I accompany. Fear nothing; he whom God guards is well guarded. When my uncle returns from the fields, tell him to watch over the tent. Next to God it is to him that I trust you."

And taking his lance in his hand, Abdallah set out on his way, walking by the side of the stranger's camel.

Halima and Leila followed the travellers with their eyes as long as they could see them, then returned to the tent.

Cafour alone remained outside, with fixed gaze and

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trembling heart. It seemed to her that the horizon was about to open and the desert to give back the master for whom she watched. Vain hope of an anxious soul! Night fell on the earth without bringing Abdallah.





XXV

THE GOLDEN LEAF



O sooner had they plunged into the sands than the stranger looked around him to be certain that he was alone, and began to play with the handle of his pistol. "I hope, my dear guest," said Abdallah, "that you will pardon the folly of that child who disturbed your repose."

"If the slave had been mine, I should have punished her severely," answered the traveller.

"We should be indulgent to those who love us," returned Abdallah. "Cafour thought me threatened with some great danger; it was to save me from this imaginary peril that she involuntarily offended you. By forcing you to eat my salt, she has made us friends for life and death. Is not this the case among you Syrians?"

"In my tribe," said the stranger, "the obligation lasts for one day. But if the second day passes without partaking of the same dish, the salt loses its virtue, and we are free to hate each other."

"Well, my guest," replied Abdallah, smiling, "you shall kill me to-morrow after I have saved your life. Until then I am in your keeping; it is your duty to protect me against all men."

"So I will," returned the stranger, then was silent. "These are strange words," thought he. "The Bedouin is right; I can not kill him while the salt of hospitality is still in my stomach,—it would be a crime. I will wait till evening. When the sun sets, another day will begin, and I shall have the right to do as I like."

All along the way he gazed at Abdallah, who went on with an erect head and calm brow. The Bedouin's pistols were not loaded, and if he carried a lance in his hand, it was only to aid him in walking.

"This man's confidence hampers me," said the stranger to himself. "I would gladly fell an enemy; I can not slaughter a sheep. Five thousand duros for such a task is not enough; I would rather kill that dog of an Omar for half the price."

When the sun was near setting, the merchant urged on his camel in order to prepare his weapons without being seen by Abdallah; then, hiding his arms under his burnoose, he paused. "Well," thought he, "the moment has come."

As he turned round, the son of Yusuf approached him, seized the camel by the bridle, and thrusting his lance into the ground, spread two carpets on the sand. "My brother," said he, "this is the hour of prayer. The keblah is before us, and if we have no

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water for our ablutions, you know that the Prophet permits us to use the sand of the desert."

"I have no time to waste here; let us go on," cried the stranger.

"Are you not a Mussulman?" said Abdallah, looking at him with a threatening air.

"There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet," the merchant hastened to reply. "But the religion of a poor pilgrim like me is simpler than that of a noble Bedouin. I do not pray, because all that God does he does well; I do not wash my face, because I need the water of the desert to drink; I do not give alms, because I ask them; I do not fast in the month of Ramadan, because I famish with hunger all the year round; and I do not go on pilgrimages, because the whole earth is the house of God. This is my faith; so much the worse for those who are too nice to like it."

"You surprise me, my dear guest," resumed the son of Yusuf. "I had a different opinion of you. Do you not wear, like myself, an amulet on your arm to drive away the temptations of the Evil Spirit? Do you not know that it contains the two saving chapters?"

"Yes, I wear a talisman," said the stranger. "My mother gave it to me twenty years ago on her dying bed. It is the only thing that I respect; more than once it has turned aside the death that was whistling about me."

"Have you forgotten the words that make the virtue of this treasure?"

"I have never troubled myself about them. My

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mother chose them for me; she knew that of which I am ignorant."

"Hearken to them," said Abdallah, solemnly. "When a man lives in the midst of these sands which may overwhelm him at a breath, it is good to draw nigh by prayer to Him who alone rules the danger."

And bending toward Mecca, the son of Yusuf repeated, with emotion, the chapter of the Koran entitled the

DAYBREAK.

"In the name of the clement and merciful God,
Say, I fly for refuge unto the Lord of the DAYBREAK;
From the mischief of the beings whom he has created;
From the mischief of the night when it cometh on,
From the mischief of the envious, who beareth us envy."

"Peace be upon thee!" cried the merchant. "Are those the words which my mother left me?" and while listening to Abdallah, he replaced the pistols in his belt.

The son of Yusuf continued to recite the Koran:

MEN.

"In the name of the clement and merciful God,
Say, I fly for refuge unto the Lord of MEN,
The King of men,
The God of men;
From the mischief of him who suggests evil thoughts and
slyly withdraweth,
Who whispers evil into the hearts of men;
From genii and men."

"Who says this?" asked the stranger. "Who reads thus the heart?"

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"It is God himself," replied Abdallah; "we are his. If he wishes our destruction, our feet lead us where death awaits us. If he wishes our safety, death falls before us like a wounded lion. He saved Abraham in the midst of the flames; he drew Jonah from the depths of the sea and the belly of the whale."

"Then do you never fear death?"

"No. Where God commands, all precautions are vain. There are two days in our life when it is useless to arm ourselves against death,—the day when God orders Azrael to strike us, and the day when he forbids him to approach us."

"May we not still fear the unknown hour that is destined to carry us away?"

"No, not if we have followed the Word of God. Your mother doubtless told you more than once what mine has often repeated to me, 'Remember that on the day of thy birth thou alone wept, while all around thee rejoiced. Live so that at thy last moment all around thee may be in tears, while thou alone hast no tears to shed; then thou wilt not fear death, whatever may be the hour of its coming.'"

"You dwellers in the desert are a strange people," murmured the stranger; "your words are golden, but your acts are evil." And he involuntarily carried his hand to his pistol.

"We are the people of the Prophet," returned the Bedouin; "we follow his teachings. Before ever you set foot in my tent," he continued, raising his voice, "I knew you, Kara Shitan. You are my enemy; you

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came to my dwelling under a false name. I know not the end of your journey, and nothing would have been easier than for me to rid myself of you; but you demanded my hospitality, God placed you under my keeping, and this is why I have accompanied you, alone and unarmed. If you have evil thoughts, may God protect me! if not, give me your hand."

"May hell be my inheritance if I touch him who has spared me!" said Kara Shitan. "Here is my hand; it is that of a soldier who returns evil for evil, and good for good."

No sooner had the Arnaut uttered the words than he began to regret them. "Here I have allowed myself to be trifled with like a child," thought he. "Shall I give back the five thousand douros? No; Omar is rich enough to pay his brother's debt. Besides, have I not rid him of Abdallah? If his heart has not failed him, Leila by this time is on the way to Djiddah. If he undertakes to complain, let him come for his douros. I have promised to kill some one; I give him the preference."

At this happy thought Kara Shitan laughed to himself, and admired his own wit.

An instant after he was seized with remorse. "It is not natural," thought he, "for me to give way to such weakness. Who now will ask my aid? I am like an old lion without teeth or claws. That young woman who spoke to me so gently, this Bedouin who trusts in me, the voice of my mother which seems to rise from the tomb,—all this is magic. Accursed amulet,

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thou hast destroyed me!" and he snatched the talisman from his arm.

"Captain," said Abdallah, "we must plunge into the desert if you would not meet the caravan which we see yonder on the way to the noble Medina."

"No," said Kara Shitan, "on the contrary, I shall join it; I need you no longer. What shall I give you to show my gratitude? Here, take this talisman. You know not what you owe it; you know not what it costs me. Farewell; if you hear me called a coward, remember that I have been your guest and your friend."

And urging on his camel, he rode off, leaving Abdallah surprised by these strange words, the meaning of which escaped him.

Left alone, the son of Yusuf endeavored to fasten the protecting amulet about his arm. It was a little roll of parchment, wound around with a silken thread. On one side was sewed a bit of velvet, to which something resembling a golden bee was attached. Abdallah uttered a cry of joy. He could not be mistaken; it was the third leaf. The shamrock was complete. The son of Yusuf had nothing more to seek for on earth; the diamond leaf awaited him in heaven.

With a soul overflowing with gratitude, Abdallah prostrated himself on the earth, and in a voice full of emotion, recited the Fát-háh:

"In the name of the clement and merciful God,
Praise be to God, the Lord of the universe,
The clement and merciful,
The King of the day of judgment!

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Thee alone do we worship, and of thee alone do we beg assistance.

Direct us in the right way,—

In the way of those whom thou hast loaded with thy blessings,

Not of those who have incurred thy wrath, nor of those who go astray!

Amen, Lord of the angels, of the genii, and of men."

The prayer finished, Abdallah turned his face homeward with a light heart and joyous tread. A new thought had entered his brain,—a thought which was a new happiness in itself. Was it certain that the diamond leaf had fallen within the gates of Paradise? Did not these three leaves, reunited from different parts of the globe, cry out for their sister? Could a blessing of God remain imperfect? Why might not a new effort, a more entire devotion to the divine will, obtain the highest prize for which Abdallah's heart sighed?

Intoxicated with this hope, the son of Yusuf walked on without thinking of the length and fatigue of the journey, and the darkness alone forced him to stop. The sky was lowering, and the moon did not rise till near morning. Wrapped in his burnoose, the Bedouin threw himself at the foot of a tree, and quickly fell asleep. But his thoughts did not quit the divine shamrock; he saw it in his dreams. Then the leaves grew and assumed a human form; Leila, Hafiz, Halima, and poor Cafour, hand in hand, formed the mysterious plant, and enriched him with their smiles and love.

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"To-morrow, my loved ones, to-morrow we shall meet again!" murmured he.

"Verily, the knowledge of the hour of judgment is with God. No soul knoweth what it shall gain on the morrow, neither doth any soul know in what land it shall die; but God is knowing, and fully acquainted with all things."





XXVI

THE RETURN



WHEN the son of Yusuf awakened, the moon was shedding her gentle light on the earth, and the breeze of the morning was already felt. The impatient traveller quickened his steps, and on mounting a small rising ground, he saw the tents of his tribe in the distance by the first beams of daylight. In front of them, and nearer him, was his own dwelling; he had waited for autumn before removing from the garden he had planted, the bower in which Leila took delight.

At the sight of his people Abdallah paused to take breath and enjoy the spectacle before his eyes. The first sounds of the morning were succeeding the calmness of the night. A few women were already on their way to the well, with their pitchers on their heads; the camels were stretching out their long necks and braying; and the sheep were bleating in their folds for the shepherd. Around Abdallah's tent all was silent; there was neither sound nor movement in the garden. "My uncle is growing old," thought the

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Bedouin; "there is great need of me at home. What happiness to surprise them all! Who would have thought once that a day's absence would seem so long to me?"

As he descended the hill, a horse ran past him at full gallop,—it was Hamama. He called her; the frightened mare fled toward the Bedouin village; for the first time she did not hear the voice of her master.

"Who has untied Hamama?" thought Abdallah. "What has frightened her? It is some new prank of Cafour's. Why haven't they kept better guard?"

He entered the garden, the gate of which was open. At the sound of his steps the dogs came out of the tent, but instead of running to meet him, they set up a mournful howl. "God is great!" exclaimed the son of Yusuf. "Misfortune has entered my dwelling."

In a moment he felt the bitterness of death; he tried to go on, but his knees bent beneath him, and a cloud passed before his eyes. He tried to call out, but his words choked him. At last, with a desperate effort, "My uncle, my mother, Leila, Cafour, where are you?" shouted he.

There was no answer. The doves were cooing among the branches; the bees were humming around the last remaining flowers; the water was rippling over the pebbles; everything was living in the garden—the tent was mute and lifeless. Abdallah dragged himself from one clump of trees to another; then his strength returned, and the blood mounted to his cheeks. He staggered onward like a drunken man.

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The tent was empty, the furniture overturned, and a table broken; there had been a struggle. The curtain of the apartment of the women was down. Abdallah ran thither. As he entered he stumbled over a corpse,—it was Hafiz. The old man was stretched on his back, his teeth shut, his mouth covered with foam, and his features contracted with rage. His hands were clinched. In the left he held a shred of blue cotton stuff,—it was the robe of Leila; in the right a piece of scarlet cloth, torn doubtless from the ravisher. Brave Hafiz! the cowards had not dared attack him face to face, but had assassinated him from behind while he was defending Leila.

Abdallah fell on his knees by the side of his uncle and closed his eyes. "God grant thee mercy!" said he; "may He be as good to thee as thou wert to us!" He rose without shedding a tear, and walked with a firm step toward the village; but his limbs failed him on the way, and he was forced to lean against a palm-tree for support. Taking his pistols from his girdle, he fired them in the air. At the sound the Bedouins ran from all sides. Men and women surrounded Abdallah, who stood pale, with frenzied eyes and trembling limbs. "Here you are," he cried, "brave warriors, Beni Amurs, kings of the desert! Oh, sons of Jews, hearts of women, cowards, the curses of God fall upon your heads!" and for the first time he wept.

A cry of rage answered his words. "He is mad," cried one of the old men. "Respect him whose soul is with God. Come, my child," added he, taking

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Abdallah's hand, "calm yourself; what is the matter?"

"What is the matter?" cried the young man. "This night, in my absence, Hafiz has been killed, my mother has been carried off, all that I loved have been snatched from me. And you—you were asleep—you heard nothing. Curses on you! To me the misfortune; to you the outrage and infamy!"

At the first words of Abdallah the women had rushed toward the tent, where they were heard moaning and weeping. The sheik cast down his head.

"Who would have thought of watching over your family when your uncle and brother were there to protect them," said he.

"My brother! impossible!"

"Your brother came here last evening with six slaves," said a Bedouin. "I knew the little merchant; I helped Hafiz kill a sheep for the supper of his guests."

The son of Yusuf hid his face in his hands, then looked at his companions, and said in a faint voice, "Come and see what my brother has done, and advise me what to do."

"Advice is easy," replied the sheik. "After an outrage there is but one thought for him who has a soul, —vengeance! You are a finger of our hand; whoever touches you wounds us; whoever seeks your life seeks ours. Omar has a few hours the start of us, but with God's aid we will kill him before night. Come, my brave men," he added, "saddle your horses and take

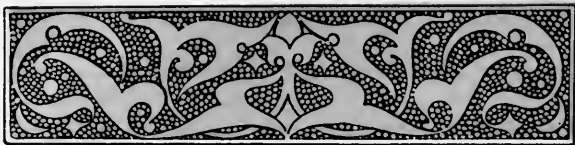
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a double ration of water; the weather is lowering, and the skins dry fast. Let us go."

Before mounting his horse, Abdallah wished to see his uncle once more. The women had already surrounded the corpse, and commenced their lamentations. "Oh, my father, my only friend," cried the Bedouin, "thou knowest why I leave thee! Either I will never more enter this dwelling, or thou shalt be avenged."

The Beni Amurs followed the son of Yusuf. The sheik gazed long at old Hafiz; then, raising his hand, "Accursed be he who returns to his wife till he has stricken down the enemy!" said he. "Woe to him who has insulted us! Before this night we will fling his corpse to the eagles and jackals. The whole earth shall know whether the Beni Amurs are brethren who cling together, or children with whom men can trifle with impunity."





XXVII

LEILA

THE band set out amid the cries of the women and shouts of vengeance. Once in the desert, all was silent, each making ready his arms and watching the horizon. It was not difficult to follow the caravan; the wind had not yet effaced the footprints of the camels, all of which pointed toward Djiddah. Abdallah, always in advance, counted the minutes, and called God to his aid; but however much he strained his gaze, he saw naught but solitude. The air was burning; the heavens were heavy with the coming storm. The horses, panting and covered with sweat, advanced at a slow pace. The son of Yusuf sighed; vengeance seemed escaping him.

At length he perceived a black speck in the distance,—it was the caravan. It had felt the approach of the storm, and had taken refuge near those Red Rocks known so well to Abdallah. “My friends, we have them!” cried he. “Here they are; God has delivered them into our hands. Forward!” And each

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one, forgetting fatigue, spurred his horse on the ravishers.

In these endless plains it is not easy to surprise an enemy that stands on his guard. Omar soon recognized his pursuers, and did not wait for them. He ranged the camels in line, and placed a few drivers behind them to feign a defence, then mounted a horse, and fled with the rest of the band into the desert.

The Bedouins came up. At the first discharge, Omar's camel-drivers gave way and fled among the rocks. Before the smoke was cleared away a woman ran to meet Abdallah,—it was Halima, who had been left behind and had escaped her enemies.

"Blessed be thou, my son!" she cried. "Do not stop! give chase to that negro with the red jacket; he is the assassin of Hafiz and the kidnapper of Leila. Avenge us; eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life! Death to traitors, death to murderers!"

At these cries Hamama rushed over the sands with the swiftness of a torrent, as if sharing in her master's passion. The Bedouins had great difficulty in keeping their companion in sight. As for Abdallah, rage made him forget danger. "Cowards!" cried he to the accomplices of Omar, "where would you flee when God pursues you?" and with drawn sabre he passed amid the bullets, his eye fixed on the negro who was carrying off Leila. The pursuer and pursued soon left the rest of the party behind. The Ethiopian, mounted on a fleet horse, sped like an arrow through the air, while Abdallah followed close behind. Hamama gained

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ground; vengeance was approaching. Leila, placed in front and held by a powerful arm, called her husband, writhing in the stifling embrace, and vainly struggling against the terrible rider. Suddenly she seized the bridle and gave it a jerk, which disturbed the horse, and caused him to stop for an instant. "Curses on you!" cried the negro; "I am lost! Let go the bridle, or I shall be killed!"

"Here, my beloved!" cried Leila, clinging to the bridle, despite threats and blows, with the energy of despair.

She was saved. The son of Yusuf fell like a thunderbolt on the ravisher, when suddenly the frightened Hamama sprang aside with a bound which would have thrown any other than her rider. A heavy mass had fallen at her feet. Abdallah heard a groan which chilled him to the heart. Without thinking of the flying enemy, he leaped to the ground and raised the unhappy Leila, pale and bleeding, with distorted features. A deep wound was gaping in her throat, and her eyes were sightless. "Leila, my love, speak to me!" cried Abdallah, clasping his wife to his heart, while he tried to stanch the gaping wound from which her life-blood was ebbing. Leila no longer heard him. He seated himself on the sand with his precious burden, and taking Leila's hand, raised one finger in the air. "My child," said he, "repeat with me, 'There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet.' Answer me, I entreat you! it is your husband,—it is Abdallah that calls you."

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At this name Leila started; her eyes sought him whom she loved, and her lips half opened; then her head fell on Abdallah's shoulder like the head of a dying hare on the shoulder of the hunter.

When the Beni Amurs joined the son of Yusuf, they found him motionless in the same place, holding his wife in his arms and gazing in her face, which seemed to smile on him. They surrounded their companion in silence, and more than one wept.

At the sight of the corpse, Halima uttered a cry of anguish, and threw herself on her son's neck; then, suddenly rising, "Are we avenged?" said she. "Is Omar dead? Is the negro slain?"

"See those crows gathering yonder," said one of the Bedouins; "there is the murderer of Hafiz. Omar has escaped us, but the simoom is rising; it will overtake him before he can escape from the desert, and before an hour the sand will serve as his winding-sheet."

"My son, summon up your courage," said Halima. "Our enemy still lives; leave tears to women. Leave us to bury the dead; go, punish the traitor. God will go with you."

These words reanimated Abdallah. "God is great!" he cried. "You are right, my mother; to you the tears, and to me the vengeance."

He rose and placed Leila in his mother's arms; then, gazing at her pale face with infinite tenderness, "Peace be with thee, daughter of my soul!" he said in a slow and grave voice. "Peace be with thee, who art now

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in the presence of the Lord! Receive what has been promised thee. It is God that raises us up; it is God that casts us down. It is God that gives us life; it is God that sends us death. If it pleases God, we shall soon join thee. O God, forgive him, and forgive us!"

He raised his hands to heaven, murmured the Fát-háh, and passing his hand over his brow, embraced his mother and mounted his horse.

"Where are you going?" said a sheik. "Do you not see that fiery cloud advancing? We have barely time to reach the Red Rocks; death is yonder."

"Farewell," answered Abdallah. "There is no more rest for me except in the shadow of death."





XXVIII

VENGEANCE



SARCELY had the son of Yusuf quitted his friends when he found himself before a corpse; it was the negro, already covered with birds of prey. "God hates the treacherous," murmured the Bedouin; "he will deliver the son of Mansour into my hand."

The whirlwind was approaching; the sky was of a milky white; the rayless sun looked like a burning mill-stone; and a poisonous blast dried up the saliva in the throat and melted the marrow of the bones. A noise was heard in the distance like that of an angry sea; whirlwinds of red dust rose from the sand and mounted in columns to the sky, like giants with faces of fire and arms of vapor. Everywhere there was desolation, everywhere an implacable heat, and at moments a silence even more horrible than the moaning of the simoom.

Over this land, parched with drought, Hamama advanced slowly, with panting breath and palpitating sides. Her master had the tranquillity of a man that

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knows neither hope nor fear. He felt neither heat nor thirst; one thought alone ruled his body and soul, —to overtake the assassin and kill him.

After an hour's march he saw a horse stretched on the sand. A little farther on he heard something like a sigh. He approached the spot. A man lay in the dust perishing with thirst, and without strength to utter a cry. It was the son of Mansour. His eyes were starting from his head, his mouth was wide open, and his hands were pressed to his panting chest. Delirious with pain, he did not recognize Abdallah; all that he could do was to carry his fingers to his parched throat.

"Yes, you shall have water," said the Bedouin; "not in this way shall you die."

He dismounted from his horse, took a skin of water from the saddle-bow, and after throwing away Omar's pistols and sabre, put it to the lips of the dying man. Omar drank deeply of the water, which restored his life, and found himself face to face with Abdallah.

"You have saved me," murmured he; "I recognize your inexhaustible goodness. You are a brother to those who have no brothers, a life-giving dew to the unfortunate."

"Son of Mansour, you must die," said the young man.

"Pardon, my brother!" cried the merchant, recovering the consciousness of danger; "you have not saved my life to put me to death? Pardon, in the name of what is dearest to you on earth,—pardon, in the name of her who nourished us both!"

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"Halima curses you," returned the son of Yusuf; "you must die."

Terrified at the sinister air of the Bedouin, Omar fell on his knees. "My brother, I acknowledge my guilt," said he. "I have deserved your anger; but however great my fault, can I not redeem it? Take all my fortune; be the richest man in Arabia."

"You have killed Hafiz; you have killed Leila. You must die," said Abdallah.

"Leila dead!" exclaimed the son of Mansour, bursting into tears, "it can not be. Her blood be on her murderer's head; I am not guilty of it. Spare me, Abdallah; have pity on me!"

"As well implore the gates of the tomb," replied the son of Yusuf. "Make haste," he added, drawing his sabre. "May God give you patience to endure the affliction he sends you!"

"At least, my brother," returned Omar, in a voice of emotion, "give me time for a last prayer. You would not have the angel of death seize me before I have implored the mercy of God?"

"Say your prayers," replied Abdallah.

The merchant unrolled his turban and spread it before him; then, throwing his robe over his shoulders and bowing his head, he awaited the death-blow.

"God is great!" he murmured; "there is no strength nor power but in God. To Him we belong; to Him we must return. O God! sovereign of the day of retribution, deliver me from the fires of hell; have pity on me!"

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Abdallah gazed at him, weeping. "It must be," he said to himself,—“it must be;” yet his heart failed him. This wretch was his brother; he had loved him,—he still loved him. When love has once entered the soul, it lodges there like the ball in the flesh; tear it out if you will, the wound still remains. In vain the son of Yusuf sought to rouse his courage by calling to mind the images of his slaughtered uncle and dying wife; despite himself he could see nothing but the happy days of childhood, Halima clasping both her children to her breast, and old Hafiz taking them in his arms to tell them of his adventures in battle. The pleasures they had shared, the sorrows they had had in common,—all these sweet recollections rose from the past to protect the son of Mansour. Strange to say, the victims themselves appeared to ask pardon for the assassin. “He is thy brother, and defenceless,” said the old soldier. “He is thy brother,” cried Leila, in tears; “do not slay him.” “No, no,” murmured the young man, repulsing the beloved phantoms, “it must be. Not to punish crime is to betray justice.”

In spite of the trouble of the son of Mansour, Abdallah's hesitation did not escape his keen eye. Bathed in tears, he clasped the knees of his judge. “Oh, my brother,” he said, “do not add thy iniquity to mine! Remember what Abel said to his brother when threatened by him: ‘If thou stretchest forth thine hand to slay me, I will not stretch forth my hand against thee to slay thee; for I fear God, the lord of all creatures.’

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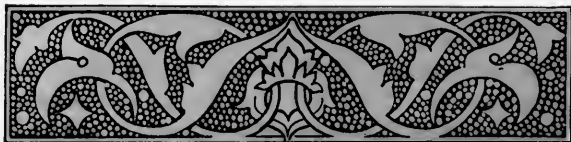
Alas! my folly has been greater than that of Cain. Thou hast a right to kill me; my life is too little to expiate the crime to which I have been led by my passions. But the forgiving God loves those who follow his example. He has promised indulgence to those who remember him; leave me to repent. He has promised a paradise whose breadth equalleth the heavens and the earth to those who bridle their anger; pardon me that God may show thee mercy, for God loveth the beneficent."

"Rise!" said Abdallah. "Thy words have saved thee. Vengeance belongs to God alone. Let the Lord be thy judge; I will not dip my hands in the blood of him whom my mother has nursed."

"Wilt thou abandon me here?" said Omar, looking round him anxiously; "it would be more cruel than to slay me."

For his sole answer, Abdallah pointed to Hamama. Omar sprang on the mare, and without turning his head, buried his spurs in her flanks and disappeared.

"Well," thought he, as he rode through the billows of sand upheaved by the wind, "if I escape the simoom, I am saved from the peril predicted me. This Abdallah is very imprudent to remain in the desert in such weather, alone, without a horse, and without water. No matter; his folly be on his own head. I will forget these accursed Bedouins, who have never brought me anything but misfortune. The time has come at last to live for myself"



XXIX

THE DIAMOND LEAF



HE wicked laugheth in his heart at his success, and saith, "I am cunning, and cunning is the queen of the world." The just submitteth to whatever may befall him, and saith, lifting his hands to heaven, "O Lord, thou causest to err whom thou pleasest, and directest whom thou pleasest. Thou art the mighty and the wise; what thou doest is well done."

Abdallah turned his steps homeward with profound sadness. His soul was still troubled; he had expelled its anger, but could not uproot its grief. Large tears trickled down his face, while he made vain efforts to check them. "Forgive me, O Lord!" he cried; "be indulgent to the weakness of a heart that can not submit! The Prophet has said, 'The eyes are made for tears and the flesh for affliction.' Glory to him who holdeth the dominion over all things in his hands! May he give me strength to endure what he has willed!"

He walked on thus in prayer amid the sands and

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the fiery whirlwinds; heat and fatigue soon forced him to stop. The blood in his veins was turned to fire; a strange disorder troubled his brain, and he was no longer the master either of his senses or thoughts. Devoured with a burning thirst, at moments both sight and hearing deserted him; then he saw in the distance gardens full of verdure and lakes bordered with flowers; the wind whistled through the trees, and a spring gushed from among the grass. At this refreshing sight, he dragged himself toward these enchanting waters. Vain illusion! gardens and running springs all vanished at his approach; there was naught about him but sand and fire. Exhausted and breathless, Abdallah felt that his last hour was approaching. "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet," he cried. "It is written that I shall never depart from this place. O Lord, come to my aid! remove far from me the horrors of death!"

He knelt and washed his face with the sand of the desert, then, drawing his sabre, began to dig his own tomb.

As he began to stir the earth, it suddenly seemed to him that the simoom had vanished. The horizon lighted up with a glow softer than the dawn, and the clouds slowly opened like the curtains of a tent. Was it the mirage? None can tell; but Abdallah stood mute with surprise and admiration. Before him bloomed a vast garden, watered by brooks flowing in all directions. Trees with trunks of gold, leaves of emerald, and fruits of topaz and ruby, covered broad

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lawns, enamelled with strange flowers, with their luxuriant shade. Beautiful youths, clad in green satin and adorned with costly jewels, reclined on magnificent cushions and carpets, looking lovingly at each other, and drinking from silver cups that water, whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, which quencheth the thirst for ever. By the side of the youths stood enchanting maidens, with large black eyes and modest mien. Created of the light, and like it transparent, their grace ravished the eyes and the heart; their faces shone with a softer lustre than the moon emerging from the clouds. In this kingdom of delights and peace, these happy couples were smilingly conversing, while lovely children, eternally young, surrounded them like strings of pearl, each holding a vase more sparkling than crystal, and pouring out for the blessed that inexhaustible liquor which never intoxicates, and the taste of which is more delicious than the fragrance of the pink. In the distance was heard the angel Israfil, the most melodious of the creatures of God. The houris joined their enchanting voices to the notes of the angel, and the very trees rustled their leaves, and celebrated the divine praise with a harmony exceeding all that man has ever dreamed.

While Abdallah admired these marvels in silence, an angel descended toward him,—not the terrible Azrael, but the messenger of celestial favors, the good and lovely Gabriel. He held in his hand a tiny diamond leaf; but small as it was, it shed a light that illumined the whole desert. His soul intoxicated with

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joy, the son of Yusuf ran to meet the angel. He paused in terror; at his feet was a vast gulf, full of fire and smoke, bridged only by an immense arch made of a blade of steel, which was finer than a hair and sharper than a razor.

The Bedouin was already seized with despair, when he felt himself supported and urged on by an invisible power. Hafiz and Leila were on either side of him. He did not see them; he dared not turn for fear of awaking. But he felt their presence, he heard their soothing words; both supported and carried him along with them. "In the name of the clement and merciful God!" he cried. At these words, which are the key to Paradise, he was transported, like lightning, to the other side of the bridge. The angel was there, holding out the mysterious flower. The young man seized it. At last the four-leaved shamrock was his; the ardor of desire was quenched; the veil of the body was lifted; the hour of recompense had struck. Gabriel turned his eyes toward the bottom of the garden, where divine majesty was enthroned. Abdallah's glance followed that of the angel, and the eternal splendor flashed in his face. At this lustre, which no eye can endure, he fell with his face to the ground, uttering a loud cry.

This cry man's ear has never heard, man's voice has never repeated. The delirious joy of the shipwrecked mariner who escapes the fury of the waves, the delight of the bridegroom who presses his beloved for the first time to his heart, the transports of the mother

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who finds the son whom she has wept,—all the joys of earth are naught but mourning and sorrow to the cry of happiness which rose from the soul of Abdallah.

At this voice, repeated afar by the echoes, the earth resumed the beauty of its days of innocence and blossomed with the flowers of Paradise; the sky, bluer than sapphire, seemed to smile upon the earth; then gradually silence fell on all things, the heavens darkened, and the whirlwind regained dominion of the desert.





XXX

THE HAPPINESS OF OMAR



ON re-entering his house at Djiddah, the son of Mansour experienced the joy of a criminal escaped from death; he shut himself up to regain his composure, and again viewed his wealth and handled his gold; it was his life and his power! Did not his treasures give him the means to subjugate men and the right to despise them?

Nevertheless, the pleasure of Omar was not un-mixed; there was still more than one danger in perspective. If Abdallah reached home, might he not regret his clemency? If he should die in the desert, would he not have an avenger? Might not the sherif think himself offended? Might not the pacha set an extortionate price on his protection? The son of Mansour drove away these importunate thoughts. "Why be terrified," thought he, "when the most imminent peril is past, thanks to my address? Am I at the end of my resources? My real enemies have fallen; shall I not overcome the others? Life is a treasure that

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diminishes daily; what folly to waste it in vain anxieties! How difficult it is to be perfectly happy here on earth!"

These reasonable fears were followed by other cares which astonished the son of Mansour. In spite of himself, he thought of old Hafiz, whom he had murdered; nor could he put aside the remembrance of Leila, or of his brother dying in the desert, the victim of a generous devotion.

"Away with these foolish imaginings, that whiten the beard before the time!" cried he. "What weakness to think of such things! Can I change destiny? If old Hafiz is no more, it is because his time had come. On the day that Abdallah was born, his death was written before God. Why shall I, therefore, trouble myself? Am I not rich? I buy the conscience of others; I will buy repose for my own heart."

It was in vain for him to try; his soul was like the restless ocean, which, unable to appease its angry waves, casts up mire and foam upon the shore.

"I must gain time," thought he; "these feelings are nothing but a remnant of agitation, which fools call remorse, but which is nothing but a little fatigue and feverishness. I know how to cure it. I have a wine of Shiraz which has more than once consoled me; why not seek patience and forgetfulness therein?"

He went to his harem, and called a Persian slave with an enchanting voice,—a heretic who was not shocked at the use of the cup, and who poured out

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with infernal grace this poison accursed by all true Mussulmans.

"How pale you are, master!" said she, on seeing the discomposed features of the son of Mansour.

"It is the fatigue from a long journey," answered Omar. "Pour me some wine, and sing me one of the songs of your country, to drive away care and bring back mirth."

The slave brought two crystal cups set in gold which she filled with a liquor as yellow as gold and as clear as amber; then taking a tambourine, she struck it alternately with her hand and elbow, and waved it over her head, while she sang one of the perfumed odes of the Bulbul of Shiraz.

"Pass round the flowing bowl, child,
Filled to the brim with bright wine;
All the ills and woes of life
Are healed in this juice divine.
Has Time writ his lines on thy brow?
Has sleep through the night fled thine eyes?
Cast into these liquid flames
Thy regretful cares and thy sighs.

"Away with that drinker morose,
Who mourns for the years that are gone;
In these wines of amber and rose
The flowers and the spring live on.
Are the roses dead in their bowers?
Has the nightingale left thee alone?
Drink, drink, and the clink of the glass
Shall be sweet as the bulbul's tone.

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"Leave Fortune, the treacherous sprite,
To the weak or the wicked throng;
What good can she give us more,
Since she leaves us wine and song?
The false one, lightly betrayed,
Nightly in visions I see;
Oh, wine, give me back the sweet dream!
Oblivion and love are in thee."

"Yes, give me oblivion," cried the son of Mansour.
"I know not what is the matter with me to-day; this wine saddens instead of diverting me. Strike your instrument louder; sing faster; make more noise; intoxicate me."

The beautiful Persian sang merrily, striking her tambourine:—

"Hafiz, thou squanderest life;
'In the wine-cup death lurks,' say the old.
Oh, sages, he envies you not,
Nor your snowy locks nor your gold.
You may chide him, but still he will drink;
Day and night he will still drink deep,
For wine only can cause him to smile,
Wine only can cause him to weep."

"Curses on you!" cried Omar, raising his hand to strike the slave, who fled affrighted. "What name do you bring me? Can not the dead rest in their graves? Will they come even here to trouble my repose? After ridding myself of my enemies, shall I care for phantoms? Away with these chimeras! I will tear out these memories from my heart; in spite of them all,

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I will laugh and be happy." As he said this, he uttered a cry of terror. Cafour stood before him.

"Where do you come from, child of the Devil?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing in my house?"

"That is what I wish to know," answered the child; "it was not by my will that your servants carried me to your harem."

"Begone! I do not wish to see you."

"I will not go till you have given me back my mistress. I belong to Leila; I wish to serve her."

"Your mistress has no more need of your services."

"Why?" said the negress.

"Why?" replied the son of Mansour, in a broken voice. "You will know by and by. Leila is in the desert; go and find her."

"No," said Cafour, "I shall stay here, and wait for Abdallah."

"Abdallah is not in my house."

"He is; I have seen his horse."

"My servants brought away the horse at the same time with you."

"No, they did not," returned Cafour; "before your servants seized me, I had let Hamama loose. She was more fortunate than I; she escaped. If she is here, Abdallah must be here too; if not, what have you done with your brother?"

"Away from here, insolent wretch! I will not be questioned by you. Dread my anger; I can cause you to die under the bastinado." His eyes glared at these words like a madman's.

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"Why do you threaten me?" said Cafour, in a milder tone. "Although I am but a slave, perhaps I can serve you. You have some hidden trouble; I see it in your face. This trouble I can dispel. In my country we have spells to cure the heart. Were sorrow or even remorse preying upon your soul, I could draw it thence as the bezoar-stone draws the venom from a wound."

"You have this power, a child like you!" said Omar, ironically, looking at Cafour, whose eyes steadfastly met his gaze. "Why not?" he added; "these Maghrebi negroes are all children of Satan; they know their father's secrets. Well, yes, I have a sorrow; cure me, and I will reward you."

"Have you any hashish in your house?" said Cafour. "Let me mix you a drink; I will restore your gayety."

"Do what you will," replied Omar. "You are a slave; you know that I am rich and generous. I have confidence in you; I wish at any price to enjoy life."

Cafour soon found the hashish-leaves. She brought them to the son of Mansour, who followed her movements with an eager eye. She took the plant, washed it three times, and rubbed it in her hands, muttering strange words. She then pounded the leaves in a copper mortar, and mixed them with spices and milk. "Here is the cup of oblivion," said she; "drink and fear nothing."

No sooner had Omar drunk than he felt his head suddenly grow light; his eyes dilated, and his senses became marvellously acute, yet, strange to say, he

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seemed moved by the will of Cafour. If she sang, he repeated the song; if she laughed, he burst into shouts of merriment; if she was grave, he wept; if she threatened him, he trembled. As soon as the negress saw him in her power, she set to work to wrest his secret from him.

"You are satisfied," said she; "you are avenged on your enemies?"

"Yes, I am satisfied," said Omar, laughing; "I am avenged. The beautiful Leila will no longer love her Bedouin."

"Is she dead?" asked Cafour, in a trembling voice.

"She is dead," said Omar, weeping; "but I did not kill her: it was the negro. Poor woman! she would have been so well off in my harem!"

"And you no longer fear Abdallah!" said Cafour, with an exulting air.

"No, I do not fear him. I took his horse, and left him alone in the desert, exposed to the simoom. He will never more quit it."

"Lost in the sands,—dead, perhaps!" cried Cafour, tearing her clothes.

"How could it be helped?" said Omar, in a plaintive voice. "It was destiny. It had been predicted to me that my best friend would be my worst enemy. The dead always love you; they harm no one."

"What friend had you to fear,—you who had never loved any human being?" cried the negress. "Hold!" she added, struck with a sudden inspiration; "shall I show you this friend who will cause your death?"

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"No, no!" exclaimed Omar, trembling like a child threatened with the rod. "Amuse me, Cafour; do not make me sad."

"Look!" said the slave, placing a mirror before his eyes. "See the assassin of Hafiz; see the murderer of Leila; see the fratricide; see the villain; see him for whom there is no more repose! Wretch! you have loved no one but yourself! Your selfishness has been your ruin; your selfishness will be your death."

At the sight of her contracted features and haggard eyes Omar stood terrified. A new light dawned on his soul; he abhorred himself, and tore his beard in despair. Shame soon restored his consciousness: he looked around him, and at the sight of Cafour possessed of his secret, he fell into a paroxysm of rage. "Wait, child of perdition!" he cried, "I will punish your insolence; I will send you to join your Abdallah."

Giddy as he was, he attempted to rise; his foot slipped. He struck against the table, and dragged the lamp with him in his fall; his clothes caught fire, and in an instant his whole body was in flames. "Die, villain!" cried Cafour; "die like a dog. Abdallah is avenged!"

The son of Mansour uttered lamentable shrieks, which reached the inmates of the harem. They ran to his aid. At the sound of their footsteps, Cafour set her foot on the face of Omar, and with a bound sprang to the outer door and disappeared.



XXXI

TWO FRIENDS



WHILE the slaves flew to the succor of the son of Mansour, Cafour saddled Hamama, took a skin of water and some provisions, and galloped through the narrow streets of Djiddah. The night was dark, and the storm was rumbling in the distance. The child began to stroke the horse and talk to it, as if the brute understood.

"Oh, dear Hamama," said she, "take me to your master. Together we will save Abdallah. You know how much he loves you; no other hand has cared for you; help me to find him. Thanks to you, I will restore him to his mother; together we will weep for Leila, and I will comfort him. Do this, dear Hamama, and I will love you." She embraced the horse, and stretching herself along the neck of the animal, gave it full rein. Hamama darted onward like an arrow, as if led by an invisible hand. As she rushed past an Arnaut post at daybreak, the frightened sentinel discharged his gun, declaring that he had seen Satan mounted on a white horse fleetier than the wind.

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Thus flew Hamama, without pausing or needing to drink. A strange instinct impelled her toward her master. She went straight toward him, regardless of the beaten track, over rocks, through beds of rivers, and across deep gullies, with God for a guide.

Toward midday Cafour perceived Abdallah in the distance, prostrate on the sand, as if in prayer. "Master! master!" she cried, "here I am!" But neither the tread of the horse nor the cries of the child roused Abdallah from his contemplation. Hamama stopped; but he did not stir. Cafour, trembling, ran to him. He seemed asleep; his face was beaming with ecstasy; a heavenly smile was on his lips; sorrow had fled that countenance which had been a prey to such suffering. "Master! master! speak to me!" cried the poor slave, clasping him in her arms. He was cold; life had quitted the mortal covering. God had called to himself this spirit made for heaven.

"Abdallah!" cried Cafour, throwing herself on him and covering him with kisses, "Abdallah, I loved thee!" And she rendered up her soul to God.

Hamama gazed long at the two friends with anxiety, and laid her burning nostrils again and again on Cafour's cheek; then she stretched herself on the sand, with her eyes fixed on the two bodies, to await the awakening of those who were never to wake again on earth.

Long after, some Bedouins, wandering in the desert, discovered Abdallah and Cafour in the sands, so closely embraced that it was necessary to put them into the same coffin. Strange to say, the beasts of

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prey had devoured the horse, but not a vulture had alighted by day on the head of Abdallah, not a jackal had touched by night the body of Cafour.

Under the shade of the palms by the Well of the Benediction, two mounds of earth, surrounded with stones to keep off the jackals, mark the spot where the Bedouin, the Egyptian, and the negress await together the day of judgment. The fragrant jessamine, trailing from the branches of the trees, festoons the tomb, and surrounds it all the year with odorous blossoms. Here the weeping Halima mourned her children till summoned by Azrael to join them; and here the wearied travellers pause, before quenching their thirst at the blessed well, to recite a Fát-háh in honor of Abdallah, well named the servant of God.¹

¹Abdallah in Arabic signifies the servant of God.

THE END

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